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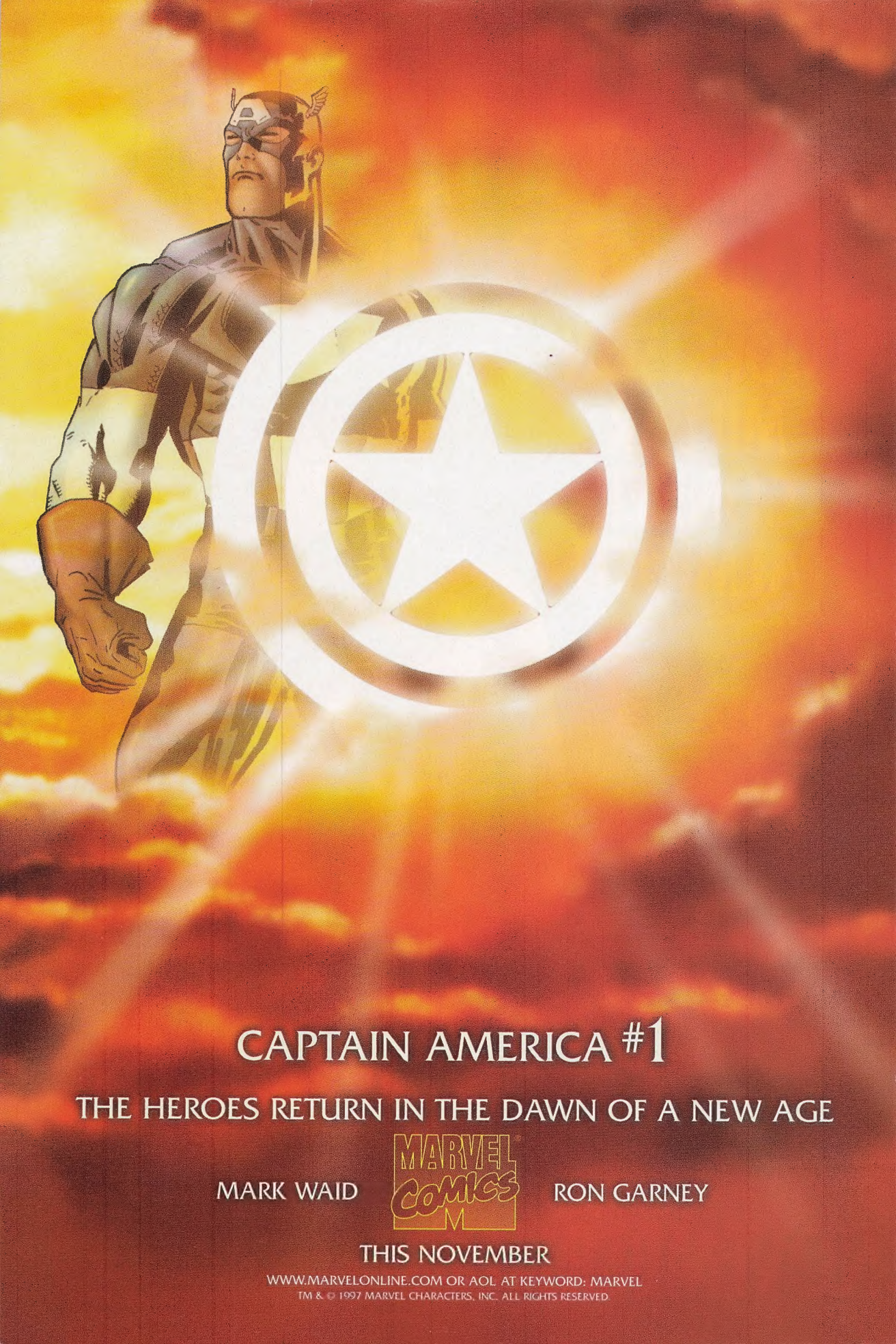
CAPTAIN AMERICA #1
THE HEROES RETURN IN THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE
MARK WAID
MARVEL COMICS
RON GARNEY
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Fantastic Four™ & © 1997 Marvel Characters

ON THE COVER
The Fantastic Four are illustrated by Alan Davis and Mark Farmer, and colored by Liquid Graphics. Flip to **page 64** to see what writers Busiek, Lobdell and Waid have in store for Marvel's core heroes when they return this winter!

Nightwing™ & © 1997 DC Comics

Nightwing is illustrated by Scott McDaniel and Karl Story, and colored by Twilight Graphics. To learn how Batman's former sidekick is doing, jump to **page 42**.

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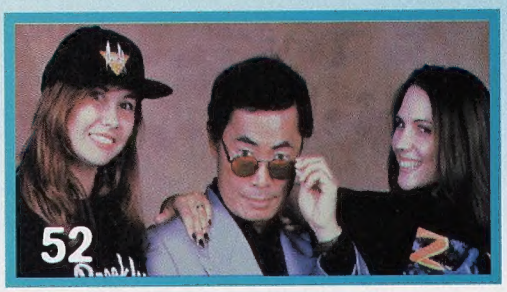

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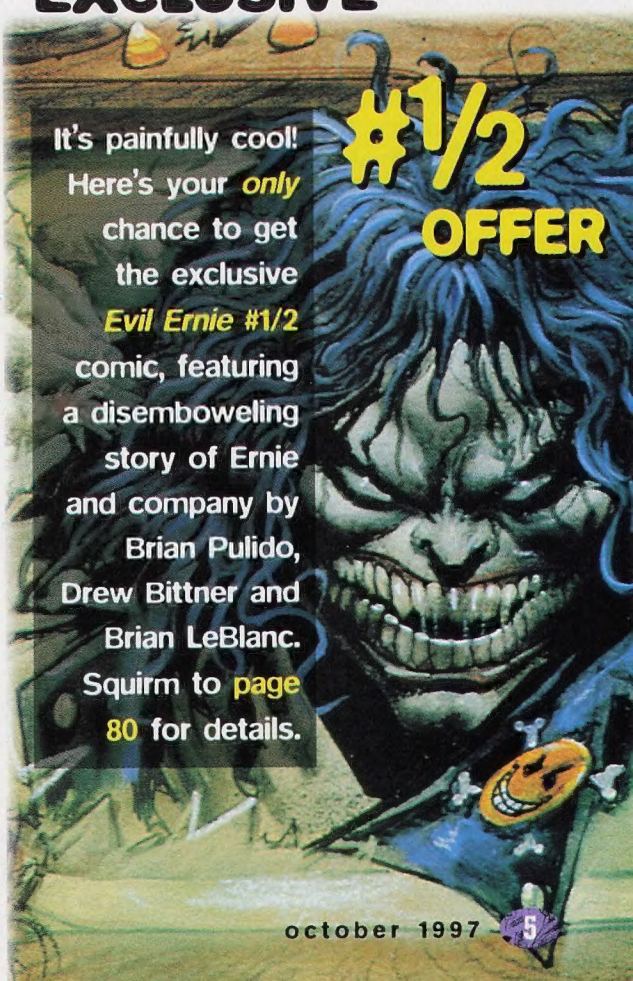

"I JUST LOVE THIS HIP-HOP MUSIC!"

Photo: Paul Schinofski

CONVENTION CRAZINESS

This has been one busy month. Thanks to your support, the Chicago ComiCon turned out to be an incredible success. All I can say is that next year will be even better. From Chicago, it felt like we went straight to the San Diego ComicCon. I got to play golf with Mike Turner and Brad Foxhoven from Top Cow and we had a pool (billiard) party ("no swimming allowed") that was a huge hit. Everyone from Todd McFarlane, Marc Silvestri, Rob Liefeld, Billy Tucci, Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti, Mike Turner, Jeph Loeb, Stephen Platt, Chris Bachalo, Randy Queen, Amanda Conner, Fabian Nicieza and many, many more celebs turned out to party.

This month starts all the new fall releases—*Divine Right* from Jim Lee, *Ascension* from Top Cow, lots of great books from DC and Marvel's "Heroes Return" is just around the corner. There's so many new and interesting projects—I can't wait!

Well, many letters I receive ask me when we're going to do a Marvel or DC #1/2 offer. Now the answer is: Right now! That's right, we will be starting them next month in *Wizard* with *Wolverine* #1/2—holy cow! And the *Wizard* Year-Ender (*Wizard* #77) should have a great DC #1/2 title for you. Whew! We did it. This month, we have a first-ever glow-in-the-dark #1/2 offer—it really is spooky.

We've also got a very cool JLA poster—I know I'm going to hang it up. Besides an awesome Alan Davis Fantastic Four cover, we've got a nifty Scott McDaniel Nightwing cover. Inside this issue, you'll find a great feature on Nightwing, who's no longer Batman's sidekick. We've also got a huge "Heroes Return" roundtable, where writers Mark Waid, Kurt Busiek and Scott Lobdell tell us what they have planned. It's gonna be great. And make sure you check out the cool feature detailing just how *Wizard*'s first-ever Chicago ComiCon went, along with a bunch of other really neat features.

Until next month (our 75th issue spectacular)...

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. Wish me luck in the *Wizard* home run derby. So far, the odds on me are 7-1, Jim McLauchlin (the pop-fly to left king) is at 8-1. I'll kick his butt.

P.P.S. *ToyFare* is on fire—make sure you reserve your copies!

ABC AUDITED

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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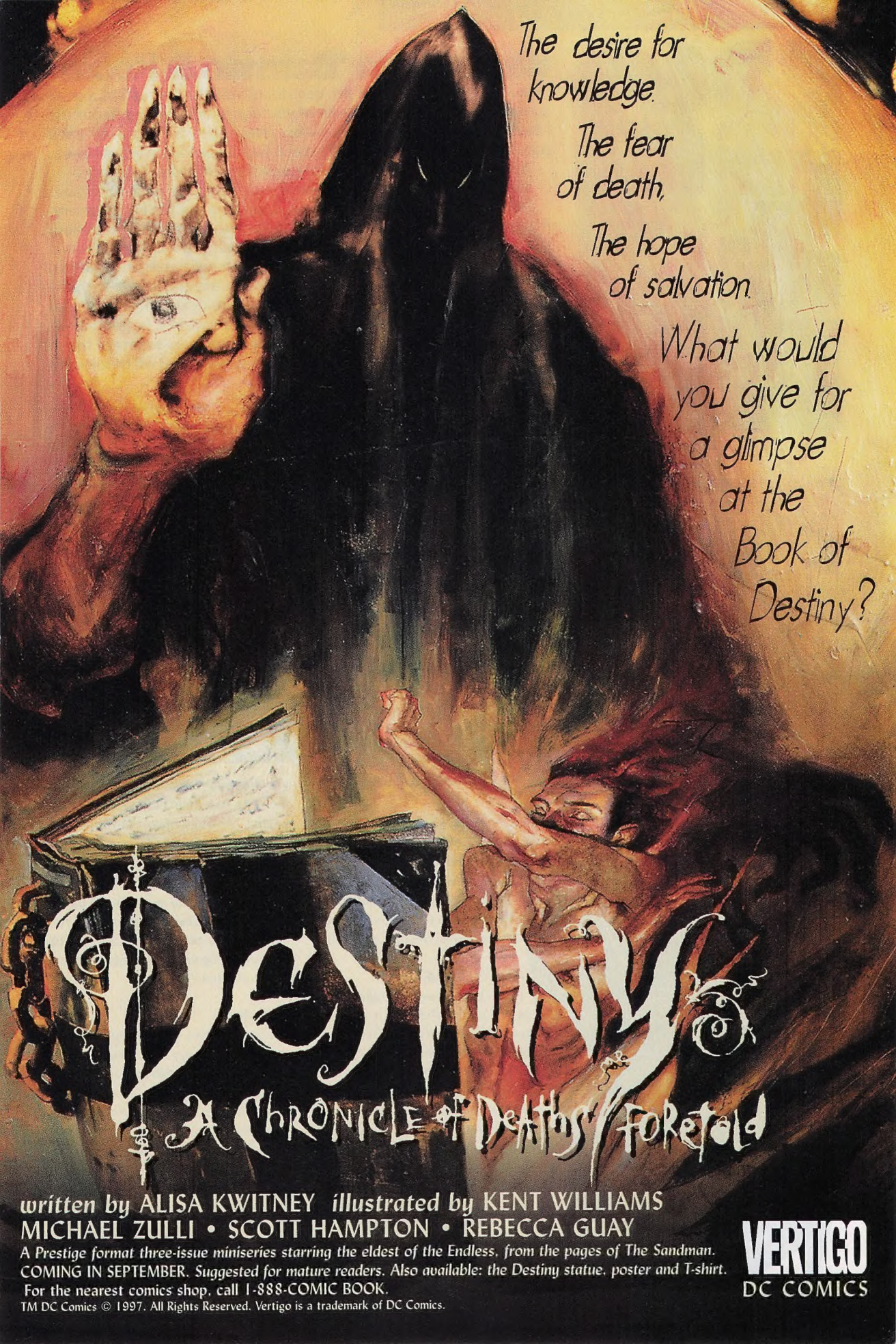
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MAGIC WORDS

Better than 'Batman & Robin'

I haven't seen it myself, but I've been inundated (Look it up!) by a cubic acre of mail telling me that all of you out in Readerland hated the "Batman & Robin" movie. Therefore, McLauchlin's Postulate #1 still stands: You will never see a comic book movie you like. In other news...

Big letters topic lately, not-so-surprising division: Top Cow.

Big letters topic lately, somewhat surprising division: Amalgam.

Hot damn, but them Top Cow guys are on a roll. Practically everything they touch turns to gold. *Witchblade* and *The Darkness* are about the biggest things going these days, and I'm seeing tons of mail on them.

On the other hand, whereas the most recent batch of Amalgam Comics weren't all too well-received, people are still in love with the idea. We're still getting tons of mail on Amalgam in general and the "Amalgamania" feature we ran in *Wizard* #71 in particular. Heck, the concept of smooshing existing characters together to get completely new characters is so much fun, we'll lead off this month with a letter or two about Amalgam...

Hey, Jimmy,

This letter is about the mega-popular Amalgam comics. I love 'em so much, I made up some of my own. Here they are:

• Milk and Cheese Ka-Bob—This guy is an amalgamation of Milk and Cheese, Ka-Zar and Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras.

• Steel Magnet—An amalgamation of Steel and Magneto.

• Conan O'Brien—This one here is an amalgamation of Conan the Barbarian and O'Brien from *Monkeyman and O'Brien*.

• Brass Knuckles—An amalgamation of WildStorm's Brass and Knuckles of "Sonic and Knuckles" fame.

I hope you like them. Everyone should try this! It's fun!

Nick Hines
Nelson, B.C., Canada
jhines@netidea.com

Y'know, you could also amalgamate Brass and Monkeyman to make the ever-popular Brass Monkey. Then there's always my favorite: combining Marvel's Rhino with DC's Plastic Man to get Rhinoplasty, the technical term for a nose job.

Hey Wizard,

How about a new title called *Amalgam Showcase Presents*? It could an amalgam of *Marvel Comics Presents* and DC's *Showcase*. Think about it—it could be a monthly title! Marvel and DC could alternate months publishing it, and it could feature three or so short stories by different creative teams in each issue. Fans would eat it up! You guys've got some connections—why not drop a line to Marvel and DC and get the ball rollin'?

Steve Achenbach
Thousand Oaks, CA

We dropped a line. DC wasn't in the mood to comment, but Marvel Marketing Manager John Dokes said, "We've all had a lot of fun with Amalgam so far. But part of what makes Amalgam fun is the fact that it's a once-a-year special event. We're thinking that's the best way to do it for now...unless the fans really want to see something on a more regular basis. So let us know."

Dear Jim,

I've been a comic collector for 12 years now and find it very frustrating that I am uncomfortable telling people that I collect comics. There's nothing wrong with the hobby. It's just that when most people think of comic collectors, they think of some four-eyed geek with acne who couldn't get a date unless he paid for it. Even in your magazine, comic collectors have been called "geeks." I recently saw "Chasing Amy" (yes, I saw it with a girl)

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

THE ONLY LATE NIGHT TALK SHOW HOST WITH HIS OWN DEATH RAY.

(EAT YOUR HEART OUT, DAVE AND JAY.)

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and it stereotyped comic collectors as no-life dorks.

Why does this bother me? Because not all comic collectors are geeks. Granted, I've seen some weirdos at conventions, but what about us "cool" people who *do* have lives and can get girls? Where's our justice? We shouldn't have to hide our hobby from the outside world just because the so-called "geeks" are bringing us down. All I want is to be able to say proudly that "I collect comics," and still be able to have a girl go home with me. That's all.

Bob Giera
Debo664887@aol.com

So say it. Sounds to me like your problem is really with yourself. You're right: There's nothing wrong with comic collecting. So why should you worry about other people's perceptions? Heck, it doesn't bother me any. I tell people that I work in the comic biz and it doesn't affect my abilities to score girlies. I still wind up getting lucky approximately two times a year on average.

So get over it. Your problem is not other "geeks." It's your own insecurity.

Dear Wizard,

I realize you guys need to make a certain profit. A good way to help you reach that certain profit is to throw a Hulk or Wolverine cover on your magazine. But you have such far-reaching arms that you always get into tons of peoples' hands every month no matter what the cover. So with that said, why don't you do an *Eightball* cover? You could devote a whole issue to indie/underground publications and really prove you care about this industry. You could help bring good stuff to the forefront that readers might not even know existed, like *Underwater*, *Berlin* or *Storyteller*.

Brendan Price
Anchorage, AK

We try to bring good stuff to the forefront wherever possible. Wizard #73 just had a feature on Antarctic Press' Box Office Poison, and Wizard #71 sported a contest revolving around Hall of Heroes' Sleepwalking. Neither title is exactly what you'd call "high-profile."

There are about a billion and 53 comics that come out every month, and try as we might, we can't read them all. So if you've got a particular obscure faverave, write in and let us know. Do a little bit of beating the drum yourself, and maybe we can do something to help expose one of your favorites.

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Jimmy Boy,

Since there's really nothing to do on a windy, rainy, cold day in Rupert, Idaho, I decided to write you a letter. I have a few questions:

1) Why do some people write questions to "Magic Words" like "How do they cram in all that graham?" Methinks it's a waste of time and they're just losers.

2) Why do people buy action figures and just leave them in the box, hoping their value will go up? What's the use of buying a toy and not taking it out and playing with it? That's pretty stupid.

3) All my friends call me "Beaver" for some reason. Do you think that's a good nickname?

4) How *do* they cram all that graham, anyway?

Well, I guess that's about it. Hey, if you ever have the time, maybe you could stop by my place in Rupert. It's not hard to find. Just ask around for Beaver, and they'll show you the way. Then maybe we could have a couple beers and play some golf.

Russell Maloney
Rupert, ID

I've got a feeling there ain't much to do in Rupert, regardless of weather. I have a few answers:

1) Comics may be the main focus, but we handle all kinds of questions in this column. And if you think it's a waste of time to ask questions like this, then how much of a waste of time is it to ask questions about questions like this?

2) I wish I knew. People who do this are indeed pretty darned stupid and should be slapped upside the head with a 3-pound mackerel until they come to their senses.

3) Nope. I mean, look where it got Jerry Mathers. He's typecast as "The Beaver" forever, and all the chicks wanted Wally anyway.

4) One gram at a time.

Thanks for the offer, but I think I'll pass. The couple of beers sounds good, but golf sucks. And the last time I asked around for Beaver in Idaho, I got arrested.

Courtesy of Dark Horse

Dear Wizard,

I've got a few Frank Miller questions.

1) What type of materials does he use to draw *Sin City*?

2) What was his inspiration in creating *Sin City*?

3) Will he do another Batman story? Maybe with Nightwing or Azrael?

Lik Way Chan
Medford, MA

Well, I've got a few Frank Miller answers.

1) Frank says that he uses Koh-I-Noor drawing ink and da Vinci brushes. It all goes down on comic-standard Bristol board.

2) Quoth Mr. Miller: "I've always been a big fan of crime fiction. The added inspiration comes from the work of great crime comic creators like Will Eisner, Johnny Craig and Wallace Wood."

3) Quoth Mr. Miller once again: "I've got no plans to do a Batman story. I'm having too much fun in Sin City."

Jim,

1) What is writer Mike W. Barr up to?

2) Am I am mistaken in believing that Bill Finger is not receiving nearly enough credit for his role in the creation of Batman?

Phillip Arrellin
Long Beach, CA

1) Mike W. Barr, whose past writing credits include the Camelot 3000 mini-series and a ton o' Batman stuff, is up to being amazed that anyone who's not related to him or looking for money would be asking after him. He's also writing his creator-owned series, The Maze Agency, for Caliber Comics and working on a Batman: Dark Knight Dynasty hardcover project for a Christmas release.

2) You are not mistaken at all. In fact, comic historian and longtime DC Comics Editor Julius Schwartz agrees with you. Sez Julie: "Bob Kane, the man credited with creating Batman, came up with the Batman visual. Then Bill Finger, a close friend of Kane's, came up with the concept of Batman. He came up with the origin, the Batcave, Alfred the butler and a lot of things that make Batman the Batman that you know. On that basis, in my opinion, the creation of Batman was a collaborative effort."

Dear Wizard,

Did DC Comics ever make a trade paperback collecting their cool, continuity-warping mini-series *Crisis on Infinite Earths*?

Bo Mackinlay
Headbod@aol.com

Nope. But they're thinking about it. If it does get re-published, it will almost undoubtedly get re-colored first. Coloring technology has improved by leaps and bounds since Crisis first saw the light of day in 1985. DC is a bit concerned about price, however, because at well over 250 pages, a collected Crisis could get a bit expensive.

Dear Wizard,

I was skimming through my comic collection when I found *Ambush Bug Nothing Special* #1. This is a great comic, but I was saddened when I could not find any other Ambush Bug comics. Are there any more Ambush Bug comics? Is Ambush Bug part of regular DC Universe continuity? Will there be any more Ambush Bug in the future?

Matt Harrington
rykstorm@hotmail.com

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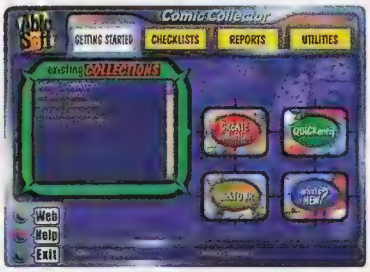

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Hey! It's Pen Pals

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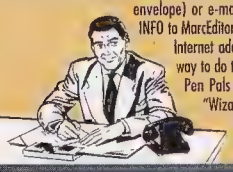

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not done yet...

Ambush Bug is a funny little DC critter who really wants to do good, but winds up screwing things up more than he helps. He was created by Keith Giffen and first appeared in DC Comics Presents *#52. In addition to a few assorted* Presents *and* Action Comics *appearances, he has flown solo in an* Ambush Bug *four-issue mini-series, a* Son of Ambush Bug *six-ish and the* Ambush Bug Stocking Stuffer *one-shot. DC Comics says that while he is a part of regular continuity, there are no plans to use him anywhere in the foreseeable future.*

Dear Wizard,
I loved *Wizard* #70's "Basic Training" article featuring Mike Wieringo. Has Mike done any work besides Spider-Man? Which Spider-titles and issues has he done?

Tyler Evans
Syosset, NY

'Ringo is the artist on Sensational Spider-Man, *where he has done issues #8-#11, #13-#17, and the Minus 1 "Flashback" for the title. Previously, he did a Rogue mini-series for Marvel, plus nine issues of* Robin *and 13 issues of* Flash *for DC.*

Dear Jim,
I am a big *Darkness* fan and I have a few questions I hope you can answer:

1) How long do Marc Silvestri and Garth Ennis plan to work on the book?

2) Who is "Batt," the guy (at least I think he's a guy) who inks *The Darkness*?

Chris Sapp
Blythe, CA

We try to reward hope wherever possible. Here are some answers:

1) Ennis is back on as the regular co-writer with The Darkness *#11. He'll be tag-teaming writing duties with a chum of his, a guy named Malachy Coney. Silvestri is on as penciler for the foreseeable future.*

2) "Batt" is an inker and aspiring writer who is the co-creator of Ascension, *a new Top Cow title that launches this September. As to where he got that wacky name, he says, "It was inspired by some fellow students when I was in art school. It's just a nickname made by smooshing together my first and last names and shortening it. I'll leave it to you to guess what my name really is."*

Geez, who's this guy think he is—Rumplestiltskin or something?

Dear Wizard,
Seems like everyone does inter-company crossovers except Chaos! Comics. Will we ever see them do one? If so, with who? If not, why?

Jimmy O'Brien
Wharton, NJ

Well, according to Chaos! President Brian Pulido: "The short answer is that we're too busy and having too much fun within our own universe to do inter-company stuff. But if we were to do 'em, my dream crossovers would be:

"Lady Death/Thanos/Darkseid: In this one, Lady Death seduces the two main meanies and pits them against each other; and...

"Evil Ernie/Lobo: We do this one all violent, with Ernie and Lobo teaming up against the world. Guess who wins?"

Yo, Wizard,
Why did you cancel "Drawing Board"? It was my favorite part of the book!

Jason Steadman
Carrollton, TX

You and a lot of other people. We've got a bundle on mail demanding that we bring "Drawing Board" back—so we will. Look for its return sometime in the next six months. Guaranteed.

Dear Jim,
In "Magic Words" in issue #70, someone asked who you thought was better looking among the Gen[13] girls. You replied, "None of the above, since all three are fictional characters." That's not entirely true. The girls' bodies (to a certain extent) are actually real peoples' bodies. Fairchild was modeled after Elle MacPherson, Freefall was modeled after Natalie Portman, and Rainmaker was modeled after Stephanie Seymour. So they may be fictional characters, but their bodies are somewhat very real!

Jim Kingsbury
Pittsfield, MA

Excuse me? What was that you said? Did you say, "somewhat very real"? You did? Okay. That's what I thought.

WHAT DOES "SOMEWHAT VERY REAL" MEAN? How can something be both "somewhat" and "very" real at the same time? Simple answer: IT CAN'T!

And even if it could, didja ever stop to think that all these leggy supermodel types look exactly the same anyhow? If you were to look at silhouettes of all three of these real-world chicks, I would defy you to tell the difference between them. It just doesn't matter!

The Gen[13] characters are not real. No matter how bad you want to envision them as somehow having a link to

HEY, FOLKS!
INSPIRED BY THE RECENT TYSON/HOLYFIELD DEBACLE, MARVEL INTERN CHRIS GIARRUSSO DOODLED THIS UP. THOUGHT YOU'D GET A KICK OUTTA IT! —JIM

PENPALS

Haniel Hanief
Age: 18 Sex: Male
B, Jln. Toh Puan Rahmah, Kuala Pari, 31450, Menglembu, Ipoh, Perak, West Malaysia
Likes: various titles

Greg Epperson
Age: 21 Sex: Male
707 Townsend Ave.
Gastonia, NC 28052
Likes: X-titles, Star Wars comics, anything good

Greg Gardner
Age. 23 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 8004
Goldsboro, NC 28052
Likes: Spider-titles, X-titles, *Fantastic Four*

Joe Polchow, 19/m
jpolchow@cougarnet.netexp.net
Bone Predator, Gen[13]

Heather Ebrecht, 17/f
haebrecht@btown.k12.ky.us
The Crow, Vampirella, Wolverine

Shannon Dew, 18/m
shannon@mindspring.com
Iron Man, Super-titles, Bat-titles

"jaam2," 27/m
jaam2@aol.com
all Spider-titles

Chuck Miller, 13/m
Chuck Miller@WM311-13,Warwick.Net
X Men, Beavis & Butt-head, Spider-Man

Justin Wilkinson, 13/m
bullsfan3@juno.com
Captain America, Superman, X-Files

Ryan C. Hall, 12/m
phlemboy@juno.com
Star Wars, recent Spider-titles, *X-Men*

Michael Dean, 17/m
MDean@msn.com
X-titles, *Sensational Spider-Man, Hulk*

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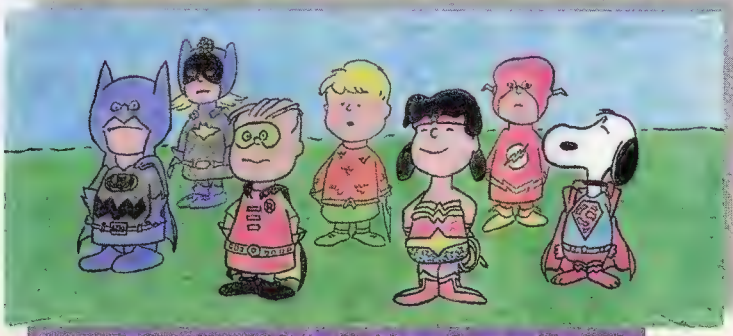
LETTER ART

Fans who got their letter art printed this month will each receive a copy of *Superman* #123 autographed by Dan Jurgens, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The creator of the best envelope wins a signed Superman sketch by Jurgens, plus the signed comic and signed *Wizard* issue! (Thanks for the stuff, Dan!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address **and a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope.

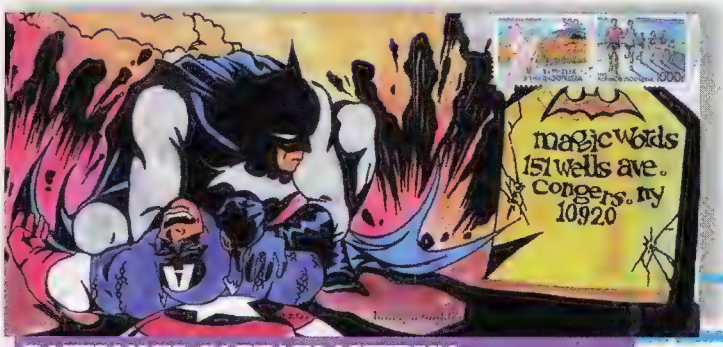
THE PRIZE

envelope of the month

INCREDIBLE MOE VS. CALV-ERINE
Jayson K. Lloyd Kankakee, IL



SUPER-PEANUTS John Robbins Louisville, KY



BATMAN VS. CAPTAIN AMERICA
Gregs J. Purwanto Jakarta, Indonesia

SCUD VS. BANANAS IN PAJAMAS
Titus and Homer Aguas Lubbock, TX

our reality, they will never be real. So forget it.

Okay. I gotta calm down with a baseball question.

Hey Jimbo,
In baseball, why is a ball ruled "fair" if it hits the foul pole?

Kevin Lilley
Brick, NJ
Homer 372@aol.com

Because the foul pole is incorrectly named. It should really be called the "fair pole." According to Section 2.00 (b) of the Major League Baseball Rules, "all foul lines are in fair territory, including the foul pole."

Jim,
1) Now that Superman is an energy being, does Kryptonite still affect him?
2) What's in Spider-Man's web fluid?

Clinton McMichael
Delta, NJ

1) Nope. As was shown in Superman *#126, Kryptonite no longer affects Electrosupes.*

2) Reconstituted chicken fat, polysorbate 80, monosodium glutamate, partially hydrolyzed soy protein, anchovies, Lone Star beer, xanthan and that juice you find at the bottom of cans of Spam.

Lemme tell ya, when Peter Parker goes grocery shopping, he gets some pretty weird looks.

Well, all this bizarre food talk is making me hungry. I'm gonna get outta here and go pound some munchies. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin has spent the last decade pounding carbohydrates and amino acids. And judging from the size of his gut, it now looks like they're starting to pound back.

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X-MEN: VERTIGO STYLE

Vertigo faves Seagle, Bachalo to team up on 'Uncanny'

Writer **Steven T. Seagle** is adapting to a new life of freelancing with a new company. "I've found that things here at Marvel move fast," he said. "Very, very fast."

Less than one month after accepting a prize assignment writing Marvel's ***Wolverine***, Seagle is shifting gears within the X-Universe. The scribe, known for his work on DC/Vertigo's *Sandman Mystery Theater* and *House of Secrets*, is ditching *Wolverine* in favor of ***Uncanny X-Men***.

"I got a call from [X-Men editor] Mark Powers asking if I'd be interested in doing *Uncanny*," Seagle said. "I told him that with my commitment to the Vertigo stuff and to *Alpha Flight*, I already had too much work. He asked if I might like to do *Uncanny* instead of *Wolverine*. Then he told me **Chris Bachalo** was the new penciler on *Uncanny* and that was it! That was all I needed to make the switch."

Seagle scripts over outgoing writer **Scott Lobdell's** plot in *Uncanny X-Men* #350 in October (see sidebar), and Bachalo joins him as a regular with #352. Bachalo, another Vertigo alum, is pretty pumped about the opportunity to work with Seagle.

"I read a *Grendel Tales* story Steve wrote once called 'Devil in our Midst' that I absolutely loved," the former *Generation X* artist said. "I knew one day I'd have to work with him. I always thought we'd someday do some Vertigo book together, but here we are on *Uncanny* and I couldn't be happier."

Seagle is happy with the chance to write the X-Men, but is taking a very wait-and-see attitude about the future. "It's a great privilege to get the shot" he said. "Everyone wants their chance to do their one X-Men story and I'm doing mine right now. But this deal is based on the reality that I have other work to do, too. I'm doing the arc, which should take four or five issues, and then we'll see if I like the X-Men and if Marvel likes my work on them."

If Seagle can handle the workload and decides to stay, he has plans for where he'd like *Uncanny* to go. "I'd like to

Seagle (opposite top) joins the X-crew with *Uncanny X-Men* #350 (above). Bachalo (opp. bottom) enlists with #352.

Al Ortega

work as closely as possible with [new *X-Men* writer] **Joe Kelly**, because the cross-continuity on these books is key. There was also a real sense of family in the X-Men when I was reading them years ago, and I'd like to bring that back. You got the feeling that without each other, they really didn't have much."

In addition to family, Seagle would like to add a dose of brightness to the book. "Joe is great at humor and that's a wonderful thing," he said. "The saying goes that the X-Men are hated and feared by humanity, and that might make them hang on to a certain darkness within themselves. But if that's reflected as an inner trait rather than just through darker stories, that's more interesting to me as a writer. That's what I'd like to focus on."

And regardless if he stays or goes, Seagle's run on *Uncanny* will be clear and concise. "It'll be one complete thought with a beginning, a middle and an end. If I leave, no one else will have to come in and clean up my mess." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Gambit's Mysteries to be Revealed in 'Uncanny' #350

Who is Gambit? What's his secret? And what's his connection to X-Men arch-villain Mr. Sinister? For answers, look no further than ***Uncanny X-Men* #350.**

Outgoing writer Scott Lobdell and penciler Joe Madureira, the creative team behind *Uncanny X-Men*, have announced that issue #350 will be their last on the title. *Uncanny* #350's **"Trial of Gambit"** promises to reveal many secrets behind Gambit's mysterious past. Steven T. Seagle writes the issue over a Lobdell plot springboard and said, "Not only will we be showing Gambit's involvement with Mr. Sinister, but we're also going to see Gambit confront his guilt over his past, leaving him at rock bottom."

While "The Trial of Gambit" does not take place in a courtroom, an inquiry of sorts does take place, orchestrated by a to-be-revealed villain whose identity will be shown on the final page of #350. This classic X-Men villain will actually act as the "prosecutor" in the case, while the Angel will be asked to defend Gambit. The trial is held in Antarctica, with the only X-Men in attendance being the Beast, Rogue, Joseph and Psylocke. The final judgment of the trial will be left up to the X-Men, and, said Seagle, "the readers, to a certain extent. They'll have to choose a side and figure out how they feel about Gambit after all is said and done."

So why does Scott Lobdell choose to leave just as his plot while returns a major X-villain and revealing Gambit's sketchy past? "You can't take something away without putting a new mystery in its place," said Lobdell. "Before I leave, I may close one door, but I'm opening another for the next X-Men writers to explore."

Lobdell will now write ***Fantastic Four*** and a few other pending projects for Marvel while Madureira is currently considering his own creator-owned project (see related story). ■ *Matthew Senreich*

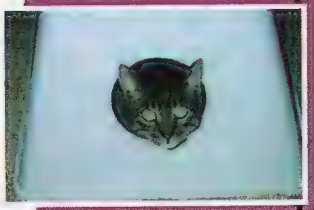
Other X-Switches

Steven T. Seagle's switch from ***Wolverine*** to *Uncanny X-Men* opens the door for writer Warren Ellis (*Excalibur*). Ellis has signed on for a four-issue *Wolverine* arc beginning with October's #119. Leinil Yu remains as regular artist, and a permanent *Wolverine* writer is yet to be found.

In October, new permanent writer Larry Hama is joined by artist Mark Buckingham (*Death: The Time of Your Life*) on ***Generation X*** for a four-issue arc. No permanent *Gen X* artist has been slated yet. ■ *JM*

The Amalgam well runs dry. "Umm... Grifter's cool and all, but is there even a Krypto in post-Zero Hour continuity?" questioned stained comic fan. "And I don't remember either character ever having such a fetish to... y'know, do it with a cashmere sweater."

Giant Spawn sock-puppet goes berserk in Dairy Queen. "It had just caught itself in its zipper," commented a stunned witness. "Once we freed 'it' Spawnie he quieted down and bought everybody a Smoothie."



Arnim Zola's cat spotted at local comic con. "It's an abomination in the face of Jesus!" screamed stunned comic fans before beating the creature with pipes. "It... uh, it turned out to be just a cat in one of those carry-bags. Funny how things work out, huh?"

ahead

ROMITA JR. DRAWS 'THOR'!

'WIZARD' FAN AWARDS RESULTS!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

ROMITA JR. HAMMERS FOR 'THOR'

The God of Thunder is running a bit late, but he will return with the rest of the Marvel heroes in his own book, Marvel sources said at the San Diego Comic Con. Look for the first-ever ***Thor*** title with a #1 on its cover by late spring of 1998.

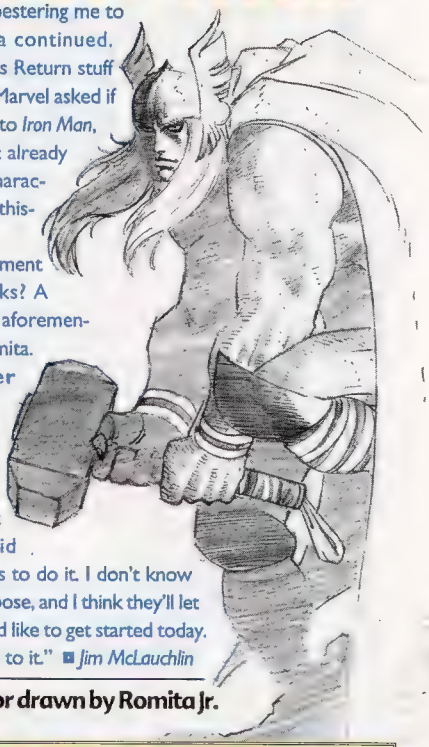
The original *Thor* grew out of the old Marvel *Journey Into Mystery* and took on a *Thor* title with issue #126. *Thor* ran until #502, when it returned to its *JIM* roots when Thor went to the "Heroes Reborn" universe. Now the Son of Odin returns with a #1 issue and a new artist in tow: **John Romita Jr.**, current penciler on *Peter Parker, Spider-Man*. And in a move rarely—if ever—seen among today's comic artists, Romita wants to keep *Peter Parker*, taking on two monthly books.

"Call it greed if you will, but I don't like the idea of giving up Spidey," he said. "I cornered [Marvel editor-in-chief] Bob Harras at the San Diego Con and said, 'We've all been talking about my doing *Thor*. Just give me the book and give me my chance.'"

Romita thinks he can handle it. "If they get me two plots a month on time, I can do it. If something goes wrong and I get sick or if they don't like it, then they can take me off. But if they give me the chance for one year, I think I can do it." In order to help him do it, Romita said that Marvel might use the production method of pencils-to-color done by Digital Chameleon, most recently seen in the Amalgam one-shot *Thorion of the New Asgods*, also drawn by Romita.

The artist has many supporters in his corner, including Marvel editors who loved his work on the Amalgam one-shot *Thorion of the New Asgods*. "Tom Brevoort and Ralph Macchio really liked the book and they've been pestering me to do *Thor*," Romita continued. "When the Heroes Return stuff was coming back, Marvel asked if I wanted to return to *Iron Man*, but I've done a lot already with real-world characters. *Thor* is outta-this-world cosmic."

The crucial element the book still lacks? A writer to get that aforementioned plot to Romita. "I've asked **Peter David** [*Incredible Hulk*] and he's interested," Romita said. "Roger Stern [*Avengers*] has his hat in the ring. David Quinn [*Faust*] wants to do it. I don't know who Marvel will choose, and I think they'll let me give input, but I'd like to get started today. I'm looking forward to it." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*



Thor drawn by Romita Jr.

Madureira Unveils 'Battle Chasers'

Outgoing *Uncanny X-Men* artist **Joe Madureira** is gearing up to redefine fantasy and the sword-and-sorcery genre with a new creator-owned project early in 1998.

Upon the conclusion of *Uncanny X-Men* #350, Madureira has announced that he plans to leave *Uncanny* and explore the possibility of releasing a new creator-owned title tentatively titled ***Battle Chasers***. Madureira is currently co-plotting the title with newcomer Munier Sharrieff, and a yet-to-be-determined scripter for what will likely be a four-issue mini-series.

Though Madureira hasn't approached any companies with his project, Awesome Entertainment, Marvel Comics, WildStorm Productions and the Image central office are all possibilities he is considering. "I'm waiting until after I finish *Uncanny* to shop it around," said Madureira. "All I know is that I want to avoid the superhero formula and make it very fantasy-oriented. When you do something fantasy-based, you have all doors open to you."

Battle Chasers centers around four main characters that come together in the first issue. The group includes a nine-year-old girl who is the strongest member of the bunch. Standing grudgingly by her side will be the greatest swordsman on the planet, who ironically will not be able to use his sword because of a promise he once made. Also joining the group will be a senile, yet powerful old mage that carries a human-sized spell book on his back. Rounding out the bunch is a war-golem type creature constructed partially from technology and partially from magic.

"Fate brings them together, not in a corny cliché way, but more by coincidence," said Madureira. "They exist in a world very much like ***Dungeons & Dragons***, but this fantasy world has simplistic technology like steam power and cannons, as well as magical items."

"The same artistic jump I made from the first *Deadpool* [mini-series] to *Uncanny X-Men*, I think I'll do again with this series," said Madureira. "I have more freedom now to do what I want, no big crossovers that I'm forced to follow, so I have the opportunity to really break out of my shell." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• **McFarlane at Marvel?** Buzz doesn't think it will come to that, but we do know that McFarlane's people and Marvel's people broke bread at the San Diego convention and they've got something in the works. Just what, they ain't tellin'. Maybe Spawn/Spidey...?

• **Gaiman Returns to Sandman?** Could be. Word on the drum is that the Vertigo office is putting together a one-shot anthology entitled *Winter's Edge* and they're trying hard to get a Gaiman-penned Sandman story in there.

• **Reborn Again?** Who knows? Marvel has publicly stated that the "Heroes Reborn" stories "happened." They weren't just a dream. But what they haven't publicly stated is that some or all the Marvel Annuals in 1998 may actually take place in the "Heroes Reborn" universe.

• **Ross Does Superman!** Word is that the schedule of painter supreme Alex Ross is going to be monopolized by DC Comics for the next four years! Ross wants to do a Superman 60th anniversary project in 1998 and follow that up with Flash and Wonder Woman 60th birthday bashes in the following years.

• **Big Changes for Big Blue!** That's what we hear. Superman—the hero who has been killed, married and revamped in mega-events in the last five years—may be headed for yet another mega-event right around the first of the year. Stay tuned.

• **Miller Enlists!** The next project for big-time creator Frank Miller? Word has it he and Dave Gibbons are re-upping in Martha Washington's army for another Martha project which may make it out in early 1998.

• **Kevin Smith Comics!** Looks like comic fan and movie screenwriter Kevin Smith is itchin' to write a few comics. Rumored to be 1998 Smith-penned projects? Maybe an Ash mini-series for Event and possibly a Martian Manhunter one-shot for DC.

• **Legends Expands!** It's looking like DC may take their creator-friendly *Legends of the Dark Knight* Batman model and expand it with a *Legends of DCU* title. Under the plan, creators could submit the stand-alone DC Universe story they've always wanted to do for publication.

• **See Joe Linsner's Dreams!** As scary a thought as that might be, Linsner is not looking to do another Dawn project until December of 1999. In the meantime, he'd love to do his dream projects, which include Batman and Killraven. Any interest, DC and Marvel?

• **'Ringo Goes Creator-Owned...** Negotiations are percolating between *Sensational Spider-Man* penciler Mike Wieringo and Erik Larsen's branch of Image Comics for 'Ringo to do a creator-owned mini-series for Image in '98.

'Darkness,' 'Witchblade' to Connect in 'Family Ties'

Just who's in charge here anyway?

Jackie Estacado, the hitman empowered with the **Darkness** force, and Sara Pezzini, who wields the **Witchblade**, will find out in the four-issue "Family Ties" storyline that starts this November. Top Cow's two most popular titles will cross over for the first time in issues #9 and #10 of *The Darkness* and #18 and #19 of *Witchblade*.

"The story shows the connections between the Witchblade weapon and the Darkness power," says **David Wohl**, who wrote the story with collaborator, **Christina Z.** "The weapons are designed to fight each other, but neither of the wielders know that. The weapons came from the same universal source, but they were made by different beings. It'll be totally new to them, and to the readers."

Estacado and Pezzini are on a crash course and about to learn they're just pawns caught up in a bigger, high-stakes struggle.

The action begins when a mysterious figure from Sara's past drifts back into the picture after seeing Jackie Estacado wield the Darkness power. "He sees it as something that could have really bad long-term ramifications for everybody," Wohl says. "And we won't say who he is, but he's aware of the connection between the Darkness and the Witchblade, and he doesn't let on he knows to Sara."

Aside from learning more about the Witchblade and the Darkness, readers will also meet a new character, according to Wohl. But if you want to know more, you'll have to read the series. "Rumor has it we may be launching a new property out of the crossover," Wohl said cryptically. "This is a huge two-month event for us and we're going to make sure that there are after-effects that go well beyond the two months." ■ *Paul M. Anderson*

A new series may launch from "Family Ties."

Wolverine Revisits 'Days of Future Past'

"Zero Tolerance" might kick off *Days of Future Past.*

Wolverine is helping to shed new light on one of the Marvel Universe's darkest hours.

This October, Marvel Comics will release the first of a three-issue ***Wolverine: Days of Future Past*** limited series set—quite naturally—in the "Days of Future Past" timeline made famous in *Uncanny X-Men* #141-#142. Written by John Francis Moore (*X-Force*) and penciled by Joe Bennett (*Captain America*), the series returns to the possible future where the Sentinels have taken over North America and killed most of the super-powered population in order to fulfill their mutant-hunting programming. And with the mutant-hunting "Zero Tolerance" story currently running through the X-titles, will *Days of Future Past* tie X-continuity together? Maybe.

"I think 'Zero Tolerance' could be the backstory," said Moore. "With it, we understand how the Sentinels might have come to power."

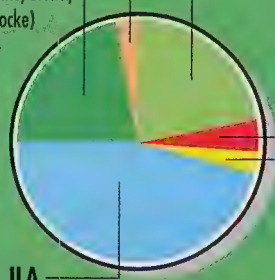
Set about a year before the events of *Uncanny* #141-#142, *Wolverine: Days of Future Past* focuses on future versions of Wolvie and **Magneto**. "Magneto's loathed by mutants and humans because of some new incident," said Moore. "But he needs Wolverine's help in stopping almost-Biblical disasters popping up all over the world." But Wolverine has his own agenda: Searching for his adopted daughter, Amiko.

A self-proclaimed "sucker for alternative-world stuff," Moore is enthusiastic about revisiting this particular future. "Those two issues of *Uncanny* just blew my mind," said Moore. Of the limited series, he stated: "With Wolverine as a driven father-figure and the unwitting redemption of Magneto, even with all the big science-fiction and superhero stuff going on, this is still a very human story." ■ *Greg Matiasevich*

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

A good superhero battle is fun. But a good superhero *team* battle is outtasight! But of all the super-teams out there, which team could whup ass on all others? We asked fans on America Online's "Wizard World" forum which of the following teams was the best of the best in a heavy duty scrap.

WHICH IS THE TOUGHEST SUPERHERO TEAM?



THE WINNER: The Justice League of America. With a powerhouse line-up, no one stands in their way, according to our online fans. "The JLA has battled the forces of Heaven and Hell," said one online person. "With that in mind, I think they'd pull it out against Thor, Cap and the rest of the Avengers."

And though everybody loves the X-Men, even X-fans admitted their favorite mutants couldn't defeat the JLA. "The X-Men can survive against anything thrown at them," said one respondent. "But there is no way that they'd beat the JLA or even the Avengers. Those teams have way too much power." ■ *William Hickey*

'Heroes Return' Titles to Come Back as #1 issues

When the Marvel "Heroes Return" titles return as regular ongoing monthlies in the Marvel Universe this winter, they'll all be doing it with a big #1 on the cover. Marvel Comics has announced that ***Captain America*** and ***Fantastic Four***, returning in November, and ***Avengers*** and ***Iron Man***, returning in December, will not pick up the old numbering they left off with 14 months ago when they went to the "Heroes Reborn Universe" and under the creative control of **Jim Lee** and Rob Liefeld. Instead, new #1s have been called for.

"We argued greatly among ourselves," said Marvel Publisher Shirrel Rhoades. "And we ultimately decided that we didn't want readers to think that 'Heroes Reborn' never happened, that it was all a dream. We think a #1 signifies a fresh start for everyone."

In a related note, October's four-issue *Heroes Return* mini-series, the vehicle that returns the heroes to the Marvel Universe, has been renamed *Heroes Reborn: The Return.* ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

we LOOKED it up

Thanos (THAH nos), noun. Marvel Universe. 1973-present; 1. Massively powered, evil being with the ability to synthesize cosmic energy for his own personal use. 2. Brief possessor of the Infinity Gauntlet, gaining fleeting omnipotence to unsuccessfully fulfill his quest to terminate half the universe. 3. What a dazed Italian guy says pointing to his schnozola.

Sabretooth Cuts Loose in One-Shot

Savage mutant **Sabretooth** sheds his behavior-modification collar in the *Sabretooth* one-shot this October. The result? "He becomes his old, nasty self and is as rude as he wants to be," says writer Jorge Gonzalez (*X-O Manowar*). "Readers will get to see the nasty, demented creep we all love to hate."

While on duty with the government-sanctioned X-Factor, Sabretooth and sidekick Wildchild learned that a group of thrill-killing former KGB agents murdered Wildchild's former girlfriend. After figuring a way to ditch the collar that X-Factor's Forge controlled him with, Sabretooth cuts loose on a mission with Wildchild to avenge the murder.

Gonzalez promises a story "appropriate for the Halloween season" that raises some macabre questions. "It plays on the homicidal instinct," Gonzalez says. "What does it take to kill? Do we all have that capacity inside? And what drives some people over the edge and keeps others in control?"

Frank Teran, who illustrated the recent *Ka-Zar of the Savage Land* one-shot, will pencil the 48-page story in the $5.99 prestige format. "His style is suited for his story. It's very gritty and has got a definite edge to it," Gonzalez says.

An edge that even Wildchild will feel, as he has trouble shrugging off the horrors left in Sabretooth's wake. "Because these guys murdered an old girlfriend of his, he feels a need to bring them in, but we'll find out just how far Wildchild really will go," Gonzalez says. "Meanwhile, Sabretooth has this itch he hasn't been able to scratch for over a year. He'll have to be careful not to let Wildchild know how far *he's* willing to go." ■ *Paul M. Anderson*

Meet...Danger Girl!

Hot off *Gen*^{13}, penciler **J. Scott Campbell** is gearing up for his new creator-owned series from WildStorm Productions in March '98! The series is entitled ***Danger Girl***, and will feature Campbell's talents on plot and pencils while fellow WildStorm staffer and good buddy Andy Hartnell scripts. An eight-page *Danger Girl* preview will be available bagged with copies of *Gen*^{13} #25 and *DV8* #14, both hitting in December.

***Danger Girl* hits in March '98!**

A NEW STORM IS COMING...
STORMWATCH
#1

Reinvented for the new century by
WARREN ELLIS
OSCAR JIMENEZ
GUARANTEED SHIPPING • GUARANTEED IMPACT

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Fans Choose Plot for Gen[13] in October's 'Interactive'

Fans of WildStorm's **Gen[13]** are going to have plenty of options come October. The super-teens are set to strut their stuff in both a *Gen[13]* ***3-D Special*** and ***Gen[13] Interactive***, the latter being a three-part mini-series that actually allows the readers to dictate the story's twists and turns.

The Internet is vital to *Gen[13] Interactive's* success

Gen[13] Interactive lives up to its name as it pits the teens against Panic, a mysterious new character who kidnaps members of the team. "The first issue will have moments in it where the fans can decide which way the story will go," explains Editor Scott Dunbier. Readers' votes, registered at an e-mail site listed in issue #1, will be counted, and issue #2 will reflect the majority vote. Issue #2 will provide readers with yet more choices for issue #3.

With the series running on a five-week schedule, the project will demand some quick work from the creative team of writer Mike Heisler, penciler Jason Johnson and inker Edwin Rosell. *Gen[13] Interactive* carries a cover price of $2.50 per issue.

Also on the agenda in October is the *Gen[13] 3-D Special*, which features two brand-spankin'-new stories and the special glasses needed to enjoy their full-color 3-D effects for $4.95. The first story is written and penciled by Art Adams (*Monkeyman and O'Brien*) and inked by Alex Garner (*Gen[13]*), and the other is written, penciled and inked by Tom McWeeney, whose cartoon style of art graced the "Robot Ruckus" storyline from *Gen[13]* #3-#5.

With Adams' story featuring rampaging dinosaurs and McWeeney's featuring the Gen[13] kids as babies rampaging through their own headquarters, the 3-D effects will not be put to waste, Dunbier said. "We're taking full advantage of all the things you can do with it." ■ *Scott Aubrey*

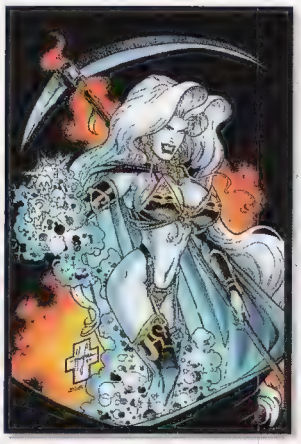
Lady Death #0 Shows Her 'Wicked Ways'

Leave it to a zero issue to "zero" in on the essence of a character.

Chaos! Comics' ***Lady Death #0*** does just that according to co-scribe Drew Bittner, taking a more "philosophical" peek than ever seen before at Lady Death.

The #0 tale of Lady Death's soul-searching, featuring her cosmic confrontation with Death itself, also acts as a link between the recently concluded *Lady Death: The Crucible* mini-series, and early 1998's *Lady Death: Wicked Ways* mini. "We're going to approach Lady Death's perceptions of what death is all about," said Bittner. "We're also going to be exploring some might-have-beens in the course of her existence."

The #0 issue is a bit of an interlude between the action-packed *Crucible* and what promises to be another rollercoaster in *Wicked Ways*. Bittner says that *Wicked Ways* returns Lady Death to Hell, which he says she'll find in a much more chaotic state than it was when she left.



Cover to *Lady Death* #0.

And the new perspective on Chaos!'s well-endowed temptress? "I've added some specifics to Lady Death's backstory that I've gone over with Brian [Pulido, series co-writer] that we'll be revealing in #0," Bittner said. "Lady Death has some huge events coming up, and it's a rare honor for me to be included in them."

Lady Death #0, busting onto the comics scene in October, is written by Bittner and Pulido and illustrated by Steven Hughes. *Wicked Ways* is slated for a first-quarter, 1998 release. ■ *Dean Simakis*

'Wizard' Fan Award Winners Unveiled in Chicago

As tradition holds, July 4 was celebrated with a big bang in Chicago. But this time, the fireworks were indoors, as the winners of the fourth annual ***Wizard* Fan Awards** were announced as part of the 1997 Chicago ComiCon.

Jimmy Palmiotti (writer and inker of *Ash*) and cover artist Nelson DeCastro served as hosts for the awards ceremony, which took place July 4 as part of Con programming. A ballot was included in copies of *Wizard* #65, which fans used to vote for their favorites from the calendar year 1996. After over 15,000 ballots were tallied, the votes determined the winners to be:

Favorite Writer: Scott Lobdell
Favorite Penciler: Jim Lee
Favorite Inker: Todd McFarlane
Favorite Colorist: Laura Allred
Favorite Letterer: Richard Starkings and Comicraft
Favorite Ongoing Series: *Uncanny X-Men*
Favorite One-Shot or Mini-Series: *Kingdom Come*
Favorite Publisher: Marvel Comics
Favorite Comic Merchandise: *X-Men: Children of the Atom* video game, Sega
Favorite Comic Trading Card Set: *Onslaught: Marvel Universe*, Fleer/SkyBox International
Favorite Editor: Bob Harras
Favorite Male Hero: Wolverine
Favorite Female Heroine: Rogue
Favorite Villain: Onslaught
Favorite Supporting Character: Mary Jane Parker
Favorite Comic Toy Line: Spawn Series 6, McFarlane Toys
Favorite Comic-Related Animation Project: "X-Men," Fox
Favorite Comic-Related Live Action Project: "The X-Files," Fox
Comics Greatest Moment, 1996: Heroes sacrifice themselves to stop Onslaught, *Onslaught: Marvel Universe*

The Independence Day spirit was also celebrated as the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund gave its "Spirit of Independence" Award to **Neil Gaiman** (*Sandman*), who has donated many speaking fees and freelance fees to the CBLDF. **Frank Miller**, The ComiCon's Guest of Honor, accepted the award on Gaiman's behalf and even dressed in Gaiman's typical all-black and sunglasses-indoors fashion.

But the biggest winner of all was Marvel Comics, sweeping 12 of 19 *Wizard* Fan Awards. Marvel Editor-in-Chief **Bob Harras** walked away happy, saying, "The entire editorial team and I are truly grateful. These were fan-based awards, and the fans are the ultimate judges of all that we do." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Daniel's 'The Tenth' Goes Monthly

Following on the heels of the successful "Abuse of Humanity" four-issue mini-series, ***The Tenth*** will go monthly this September. Created and owned by **Tony Daniel** (*Spawn, X-Force*) who will serve as artist on the new Image title, *The Tenth* will be co-written once again by Beau Smith (*Guy Gardner, Warrior*).

"Popularity of the mini-series was huge," said Smith. "Book demand went up 10,000 copies between the first and second issues and another 10,000 between the third and fourth issues. The fans really seem to like the book."

The Tenth deals with three heroes trying to stop a ruthless madman from causing a genetic holocaust on Earth. There is the Tenth, a man turned into a monster by the evil madman Rhazes Darkk. Joining the Tenth are Espiranza, a troubled girl with telekinetic powers, and her best friend, the lighthearted Zorina.

The first issue takes place right after the conclusion of the mini-series in which Rhazes Darkk's plan to cause a genetic holocaust has been temporarily stopped by the Tenth.

"The Tenth's upcoming adventures will be taking him global with the first issue kicking off in Japan," said Daniel. "He is going to find out what the relationship is between his nemesis Rhazes Darkk and the governments of the world."

■ *Mark Aronowitz*

The Tenth **returns in September.**

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DOUBLE TAKES

That ain't no Dunkin Donuts! This donut shop in the *Azrael/Ash* one-shot looks like none we've ever seen. Where does it come from? *Azrael/Ash* penciler Joe Quesada tells all: "It's named for painter Joe Jusko, who did *Vampirella: Blood Lust*. Jusko's a friend and a former New York City cop. We've got kind of a running joke where I'm always telling him he'd better lay off all those donuts. So I figured, 'What better tribute to ol' Officer Jusko?' "

But what did Jusko, a man who Quesada describes as "a big, imposing guy about eight-foot-nine who used to work the worst beat in town" think? "Thankfully, he got a laugh out of it," Quesada said. "He won't be killing me."

company updates

ABIOGENESIS PRESS
After being nominated for an Eisner Award for "Best Continuing Series," Gary Spencer Millidge's ***Strangehaven*** #8, shipping in November, will feature a special Christmas story.

ABSTRACT STUDIO
October's ***Strangers in Paradise*** #10 sees Katchoo unwillingly working for her former employer, the evil Darcy Parker, while Francine frantically tries to get in touch with Katchoo.

ACCLAIM COMICS
October sees a Master Darque 48-page one-shot for only $3.95 in which **Witchblade** co-writer Christina Z. revamps the Valiant arch-villain.

ARCHIE COMICS
Archie celebrates Jughead's 100th issue in October by presenting a three-part crossover story connecting *Archie* #567, ***Jughead* #100** and *Betty* #57.

AVATAR PRESS
It's Matt Martin Month in October as the **Snowman** creator will pencil the cover to *Ravening* #0, return to Vortex on the *Vortex Special* #1 and release the first issue of a new three-issue mini-entitled *Snowman: Dead and Dying*.

BONGO COMICS
In October's ***The Simpsons*** #33, Springfield's reality is turned on its ear as one of Professor Frink's experiments goes wild. Get ready for Marge as the mayor, Homer as a hitman and more.

CHEEKY PRESS
Issue #3 of the nine-issue mini-series ***Nemesister*** hits stands in September and continues Babette Buster's investigation to find a missing teenager.

CLAYPOOL COMICS
In celebration of **Dracula's** 100th anniversary, *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark* #55 will feature an appearance by Dracula's daughter.

DARK HORSE COMICS
License mania! Dark Horse has renewed the "**Star Wars**" comic license and picked up licenses for "Terminator," "Lost in Space" and Wizards of the Coast's collectible card game ***Magic: The Gathering***! More details next month.

DC COMICS
September's *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* #100 features a new **Alex Ross** cover....Expect Captain Marvel to join the **JLA** with January's *JLA* #16, replacing Aztek. Then Hourman, the Master of Time, will join; he's from the 850th century and has ties to the Golden Age Hourman.

EVENT COMICS
October's *Painkiller Jane* #5 is the lead-in to the upcoming *Painkiller Jane* #0. **Mark Waid** and Brain Augustyn write, while Rick Leonardi provides art.

FIREMAN PRESS
Larry Elmore, the super-famous artist known for his work on *Dungeons & Dragons*, will paint the cover to *Scud: The Disposable Assassin* #17, hitting stands in September.

IMAGE COMICS
• HOMAGE COMICS
Kurt Busiek's Confessor storyline from *Astro City* #4-#9 is collected (along with *Astro City* #1/2) in one volume this November....**Scott McCloud's** massive *New Adventures of Abraham Lincoln* one-shot is currently scheduled for February, to coincide with the 16th President's birthday.

• IMAGE COMICS GROUP
Jim Krueger's cult hit ***Foot Soldiers*** will march over to Image Comics in September in a new bimonthly series.

• TOP COW COMICS
Heads up! One of every four copies of October's *Witchblade* #18 sports a **Mike Turner/Marc Silvestri** jam cover.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS
WildStorm has struck a deal with Byron Preiss to produce a line of novels based on WildStorm characters. First out of the gate will be a Gen^{13} paperback by Jeff Mariotte and Chris Golden with a painted cover by Joe Chiodo....*StormWatch* gets a facelift in October as it relaunches with a new #1 by **Warren Ellis** and Oscar Jimenez....**Alan Moore** writes a four-part *Voodoo* mini-series beginning in November....***WildStorm Halloween '97*** stars your favorite Gen^{13}, Team 7 and WetWorks characters in one spooky book!...***Gen^{13}/Batman*** has been postponed until at least early '98.

ISM STUDIOS
Great Big Beef is closing in on issue #100 as #98 hits this summer exploring "Why is Bill Feeling So Bill?" And in September, issue #99 is a 33-page spectacular!

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
Kitchen Sink is in the midst of a managed buyout, with Denis and Jim Kitchen attempting to buy back most of the company. As such, projects scheduled for summer release like *The Spirit: The New Adventures* and ***The Crow*** will not ship on time.

LIGHTNING COMICS
Christina Z. (*Witchblade*) will write a three-issue *Hellina* series, revamping the character. Randy Queen (Darkchylde) will supply the cover to #1.

MARVEL COMICS
Marvel has announced it has the license to

produce comics based on the hit movie "**Men in Black**" for the next five years....The Marvel horror line mentioned in "Wizard News" in issue #72 will be consolidated under the brand name "**Strange Tales**." The stories will *not* be Code-approved....***Moon Knight*** returns with a four-issue mini-series by MK creator Doug Moench with artist Tommy Lee Edwards. Expect old foes like Morpheus, Bushman, Black Spectre and even the Werewolf to appear in the series, debuting in November....As Ron Garney moves to *Captain America*, *Silver Surfer* will have fill-in artists until a regular penciler is announced; **Tom Grummett** (*Action Comics*) will handle #134-#137 and Jon J Muth (*Moonshadow*) will take on #138-#141....The **X-Men's** youngster stars in the *Kitty Pryde: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* three-issue mini-series beginning in October.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
Jason Asala's *Poe* #1 and David Quina's *The Red Flannel Squirrel* #1 are the first books published under Sirius' new creator-owned imprint **Dog Star Press**. Look for them in October.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
October's *Action Girl Comics* #13 is a Halloween issue featuring the talents of **Jill Thompson** (*Sandman*) and Sarah Dyer.

TOPPS COMICS
Topps' ***Xena: Warrior Princess*** #0 in October is written and drawn by Aaron Lopresti (*Sludge*).

WARP GRAPHICS
Twenty Years of Pointed Ears, a 160-page hardcover book will see print in October. The book celebrates 20 years of ***Elfquest*** and compiles the best stories from that title. All the stories are presented in full color, and story and art is provided by Richard and Wendy Pini and a slew of others. The book will carry a $19.95 price tag.

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON **WIZARD WORLD**

RAMPAGE THROUGH WIZARD WORLD!

Make this guy a superhero!

This month, enter the "Create Rampage" contest! Rap star Rampage is a huge *Wizard* fan and has asked our online users to make him into a superhero in a way connected to his new album "Scouts Honor...By Way of Blood."

You can log on Wizard World's "Contest" section to download Rampage pictures and sound clips to get inspiration. Two creative fans will *each* win a custom jacket, a personally autographed poster, a t-shirt, free CDs and a bunch of cool comics. The best Rampage characters will appear in a future issue of *Wizard* in the "Byte This" section.

Attention collectors! Meet Wizard Press Price Guide Editor Lars Pearson to discuss comic collecting! Lars will be there on September 16 at 8:00 PM (EST) to give you inside tips on building a valuable comic book collection.

On America Online, Keyword: Wizard.

CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

SEPTEMBER 13 (Saturday)
- INDY COMICS CHAT

Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

SEPTEMBER 16 (Tuesday)
- *WIZARD* UNPLUGGED: PRICE GUIDE

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

SEPTEMBER 22 (Monday)
- BREAKING IN WITH GLASS HOUSE GRAPHICS' DAVID CAMPITI

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats

■ *Buddy Scalera* (WizardTGTC@aol.com)

Small Press Creators Unite on 128-Page Comic

Charles Vess (*Sandman*), Shannon Wheeler (*Too Much Coffee Man*) and over 40 other small press creators are combining their efforts to offer a 128-page comic book for...$2.95?

"It's easy to do a comic this cheap when the cartoonists contribute work for free, the distributors distribute it for free and the printer gives you a really good deal," said Small Press Expo organizer Chris Oarr of the comic anthology simply entitled ***Small Press Expo Comic***. "When something serves a good cause, I think everyone is willing to aid you in some respect."

The 128-pager is issued in conjunction with the 1997 Small Press Expo being held in Silver Spring, Maryland September 19-21. It features all-new work from the biggest small press creators including the aforementioned, plus Marc Hempel (*TUG & buster*), Alex Robinson (*Box Office Poison*), Frank Cho (*Liberty Meadows*) and numerous others. In addition to being offered at the convention, the monster-sized comic book will also be available at comic stores everywhere in September, with all proceeds from sales going to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

Besides highlighting the small press gems, *Small Press Expo Comic* will also contain a listing of all the current Comic Book Legal Defense Fund cases, information about the International Comics and Animation Festival and the actual Small Press Expo itself.

For more information about the Small Press Expo, feel free to call Chris Oarr at (301) 565-8340 or e-mail him at coarr@erols.com. ■ *Matthew Senreich* W

Scud

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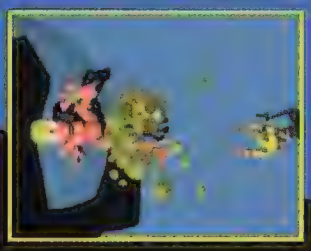
HEART BREAKER SERIES 1373

THIS UNIT WILL SELF-DESTRUCT
UPON TERMINATION OF TARGET

Disposable, like a diaper. But he doesn't take any crap.



Multiple Missions pit Scud against a bizarre collection of villains and enemy Scuds.

Obliterate up to 16 opponents over LAN or HEAT.NET.

Top down view and easy to master controls keep action fast and furious.

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Scud is the coolest robot assassin to ever be dispensed from a vending machine. He's programmed to self destruct, but intent on sticking around quite a bit longer. He's a coin operated killer hellbent on customer satisfaction, but there's always one sick, twisted freak who won't listen to reason.

"Illustration by Edvis"

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• Single player, multiplayer, or compete on HEAT.NET!

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$ALE OF THE

ANTICIPATION Armed with a thousand bucks, this [illegible] to make a killing at the auction.

BY GREG ORLANDO
PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

ARMED WITH $1,000 AND A DREAM, TWO 'WIZARD' EDITORS STORM SOTHEBY'S AUCTION

CENTURY

THIS IS HOW IT ENDS: I'm walking through the streets of New York City with a $900 copy of *Detective Comics* #64 stuffed inside my shirt, and the book's Mylar sleeve is chafing my pectoral muscles.

THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS: with a dollar and a dream. Actually, $1,000.

Flash back to early June when the *Wizard* editors made a momentous decision. They gave two *Wizard* staffers a cool grand (in the form of 10 $100 bills, to be exact), set them up with a photographer and sent them into New York City to make mischief at a comic book auction held in the world-famous Sotheby's auction house (pronounced "SUTH-uh-beez"). Their mission? Simple. Buy a comic. Save the receipt. Damn the torpedoes, never mind the bollocks and come home with a good story.

"Let's send Greg and Lars," the editors said. And so it was.

It was Friday, June 13, 12 p.m., and a very muggy day in the city.

BEFORE THE STORM...

Sotheby's is having a bit of an identity crisis this day. Along with comic books, the place is hosting auctions for Russian art, antique silver and possibly antique Russian silver art. Who knows? The building's full of business suits—all seem to have leather briefcases grafted to their hands and cellular phones surgically attached to their ears. Simple logic says these guys don't know a comic book from a pastrami sandwich.

One long hallway on the building's second floor is set up to display the merchandise for the comic auction. Here, casually dressed comic fans, most wearing loose-fitting jeans and rock T-shirts, are prowling about, checking out the goods.

The walls are lined with comic art and memorabilia of every sort. The stuff runs the gamut from the mundane (Star Wars sketches by fantasy artists Tim and Greg Hildebrandt) to the exotic (two pages of Robert "The Blasphemer" Williams' artwork from *Zap* #12—"My Filthy Mouth is Killing Me") to the truly spectacular (the cover for *Superman* #17, showing Superman giving hell to dictators Adolf Hitler and General Hideki Tojo).

Everything for sale here is comic-related. Glass cases nestled against the side walls contain several 10-inch-plus original sculptings of prominent action figures (including such never-released figures as Iron Man Radiation Armor and Gauntlet from Marvel's Dark Riders). With only one 10-inch prototype made for each Toy Biz action figure, these puppies are extremely rare—the cheapest one is appraised for $1,200.

Two viewing areas are set up for the express purpose of having men in white Sotheby's shirts scowl disapprovingly at bidders who want to check out some of the comics up for bid. The comics are kept behind glass cases and handed to the fans as if the issues were more fragile than a 16-year-old girl's heart.

The mood is lighthearted and everyone's milling about. Sure, fans may be laughing and joking with each other, but no one is fooled. This is serious, serious business.

Among the fans is Lars Pearson, *Wizard*'s price guide manager and the one holding the money. He's the guy in the ill-fitting gray striped shirt, the only man in the entire auction who takes his glasses off to make a bid.

He'll be doing the bidding today, but right now, he's at the viewing table, staring open-mouthed at the first two years' worth of *Fantastic Four* comics sitting in front of him. He looks like he's just hit the lottery.

THE AUCTION
(OR "NO SOUP FOR LARS")

The auction, which begins promptly at 2 p.m., is being held in a long, rectangular room in Sotheby's basement. Three-hundred gray metal folding chairs are set up to accommodate the crowd, and it's still not enough.

Fans may be laughing and joking, but no one is fooled. This is serious, serious business.

Strange as it seems, a lot of the buyers aren't even in the building. Two rows of phones line the left side of the room so Sotheby's employees can take call-in bids. Some agents are packing laptops and receiving bids over the Internet. Still other bids are made—in writing—by absentee bidders.

At the front of the room, the auctioneer (a reasonably constipated middle-aged man in a suit and jacket) is standing behind a wooden podium, yelling out prices like a machine gun spittin' bullets.

None of the comics from the auction are brought into the room. Instead, the items—called "lots"—are shown on two TV sets, one in the front of the room and the other strategically placed on the left side of the room.

Things have just gotten serious. In contention is the queen mother of all comics: *Detective Comics* #27, featuring Batman's first appearance. "Lot #122," the auctioneer says with a bit of an English accent, "*Detective Comics* #27—$40,000." Before he can finish, a man in a blue T-shirt in the back row holds up an octagonal blue paddle. On the paddle is

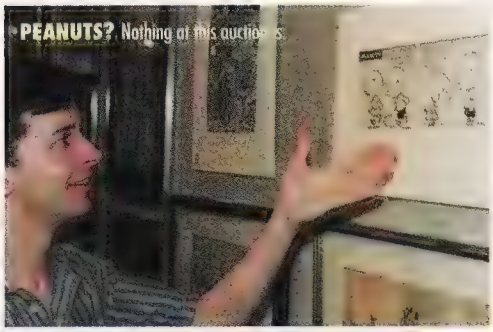
the bidder's identification number, used to tell one bidder from another, and also to identify who bought what item.

Bam! Before the man can even lower his paddle, two more—one in the middle of the room, and one in the front, on the left row—are raised. The auctioneer, who's gripping the podium by its sides, doesn't acknowledge the new bidders by pointing, but rather, by yelling. "Left row, $45,000, $50,000, $50,000." The man in the back has dropped out and it's now a two-horse race. Heads whip back and forth to watch the battle. Before the auctioneer can say "fair warning" (the equivalent of "going once, going twice, going three times..."), the bid climbs to $55,000 and then $57,500.

When the man in the graying beard and gray T-shirt (bidder #407) in the center of the room goes to $62,500, the battle is ended. "Fair warning." The silence is deafening, but ends in enthusiastic applause when he finally says, "Sold!"

The man holds up his paddle so the item can be properly billed to its new owner. The paddle and hand that holds it shake slightly as they're raised. With Sotheby's fee (called a "Hammer fee"), the book's final price is a very respectable $68,500. The buyer, a hobby shop owner, grins like a shark.

20/20 HINDSIGHT If only Mom hadn't cleaned out the attic...



PEANUTS? Nothing at this auction.

Meanwhile, Lars is taking a beating. Every time he bids, he's instantly outbid by someone else. And for some strange reason, he's still compelled to take his glasses off before making a bid.

Lars begins his quest with Lot #29, a copy of *Action Comics* #5. Appraised at $500-$800, the bidding starts at $500. With a bit of bravado, Lars raises his paddle (#450) and bids $600. A rather portly man in a Nirvana shirt counters with $700. Before the man can lower his paddle, Lars puts his paddle up and the auctioneer adds another $100 to the book's price. In seconds, the book's price exceeds *Wizard*'s $1,000 limit, eventually selling for $1,725, over twice its appraised value.

Lars, who's from a farm somewhere in Iowa, looks mad enough to dump a load of manure on someone.

EXCEDRIN HEADACHE $1,000 is getting Lars nowhere.

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THE VISITOR

From the Director and Producer of "INDEPENDENCE DAY"

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Things move from bad to worse as Lars makes bids for *Batman* #2-#3, *Adventure Comics* #103, *The Big All-American Comic Book* and *All-Star Comics* #1. He doesn't even come close to buying any of them, and all his defeats occur in less time than it takes to eat a donut. Losing is a good teacher, it seems, and the lesson of the day is that $1,000 doesn't go very far at a comic book auction.

THE SCORE...

By 3:35 p.m., everybody's deodorant has given out. The floor is a stifling pit. The smell of body odor mixes with the heady aroma of desperation. One item is sold roughly every minute and the auctioneer seems to be getting stronger as the day goes on.

Adventure Comics #40 (the first appearance of the Golden Age Sandman) is bought for $12,650 by a large bald man in his 20s. A copy of *Superman* #1 sells for $8,500. *Marvel Comics* #1 nets a whopping $36,000. One man pays $19,000 for the original Jerry Robinson cover artwork to *Batman* #12, which shows the Caped Crusader and Boy Wonder riding an army jeep. Both heroes are grinning like they've been goosed. Lars, meanwhile, has yet to see, let alone grab, the brass ring. Thanks to him driving up the prices, though, a lot of books sell for exactly $1,100.

A few minutes after four, the TV screen flashes a picture of Lot #188—*Detective Comics* #64. On its face, Batman and Robin are shown battling thugs in an airport hangar. Inside, the book features Batman and Robin battling the Joker (Who dies in the issue—no kidding!), with story and art by Batman creator Bob Kane. It also features the first appearance of the Boy Commandos by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon. For a 50-year-old comic, this baby's in great shape. It's a helluva book and Lars knows it.

Lars is shaking ever so slightly. This book, which is appraised at $1,000-$2,000, is conceivably within his price range. It's hard to tell, but he might be drooling.

Someone on the right side of the room opens the bidding at $600. Lars raises his paddle and the price jumps to $700. For a brief moment, there is silence. Everyone seems to be tapped out, but someone in the back bids $800. "Curses," Lars mumbles to himself before raising the stakes to $900. And then...no one challenges him. There's a deathly silence that seems to stretch for hours.

"Going once, going twice," says the auctioneer. There's another pause, this one not nearly as long. "Fair warning...sold." Lars holds up his paddle and the auctioneer takes down his number. Something, possibly the threat of public humiliation, stops Lars from doing a victory dance.

THE END OF ALL SONGS...

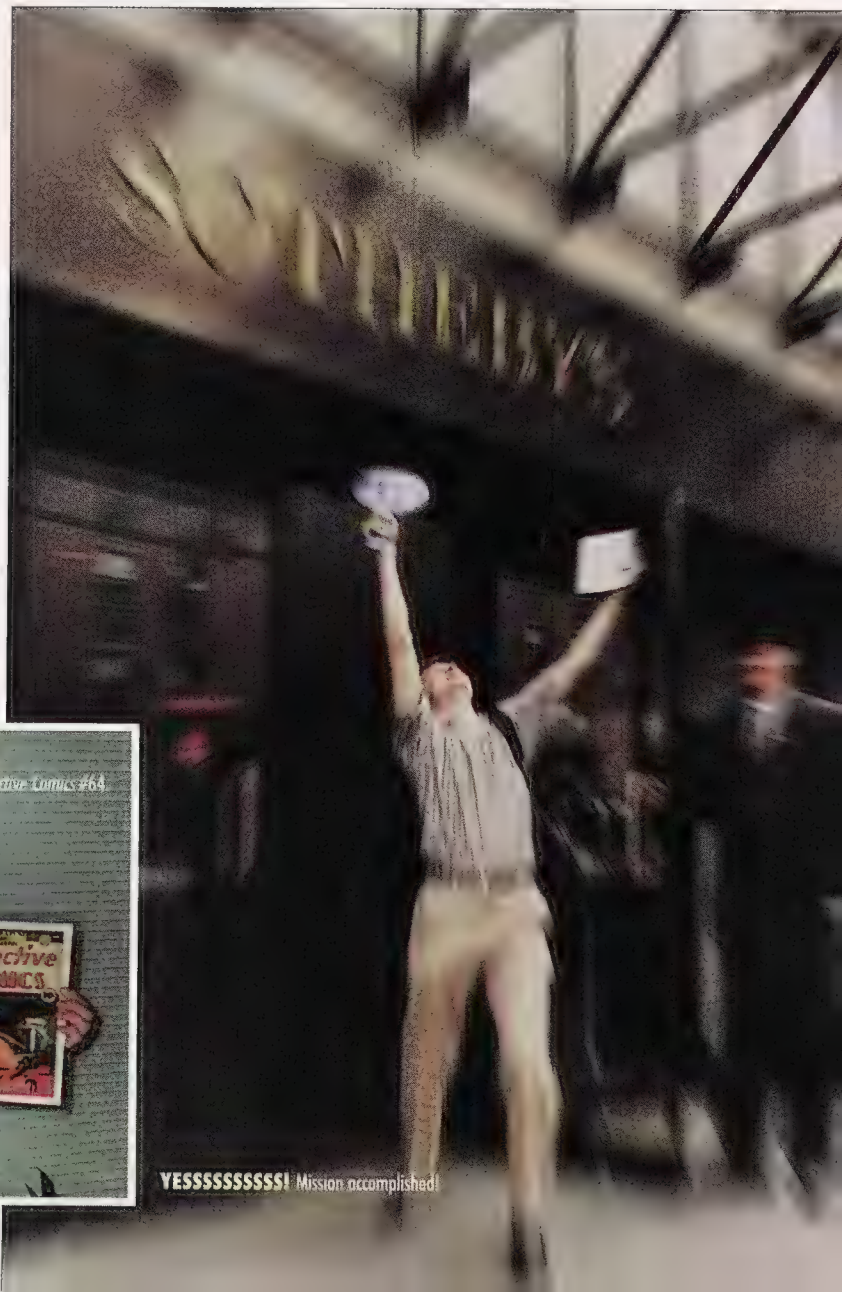
Fresh from his victory, Lars springs from his chair and bolts upstairs. The auction's still going on, but he's got no more money to spend and is eager to see what *Wizard*'s $900 just bought.

The cashier's line is long, but not overly so. Paying is a relative breeze. The book, with taxes and fees, comes to $1,110.04. Lars forks over an additional $110.04 to cover the bill. Looks like he's got a date with a reimbursement form back at the Wizard offices. After getting a receipt, Lars hustles over to an old man whose sole job is to give people the stuff they bought. Lars hands me the goods, and the humorless old guy doesn't even blink when I stuff a $900 comic down my shirt for the long, hot walk to the train station.

Oh yes, and when I finally board the Long Island Railroad train and sit down, the first thing I do with that $900 comic is take it out of the Mylar sleeve it came in (the one that chafed my pectorals something fierce) and read the darn thing. And I enjoy every last minute of it.

It *is* just a comic, you know. W

Greg Orlando is a copy editor for Wizard: The Guide to Comics. *We tried auctioning him off for 50 bucks, but all we got was a lousy $16.50 and a pack of gum.* (With additional reporting by Lars Pearson.)



YESSSSSSSSSS! Mission accomplished!

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The Vault Detective Comics #64

FANTASTIC FOUR #1
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MARVEL COMICS
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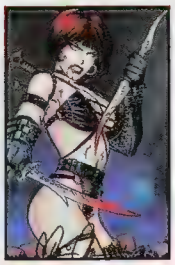

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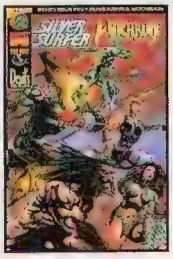

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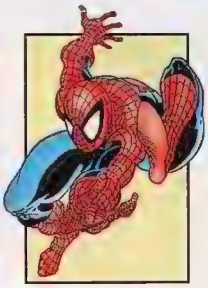

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Dev

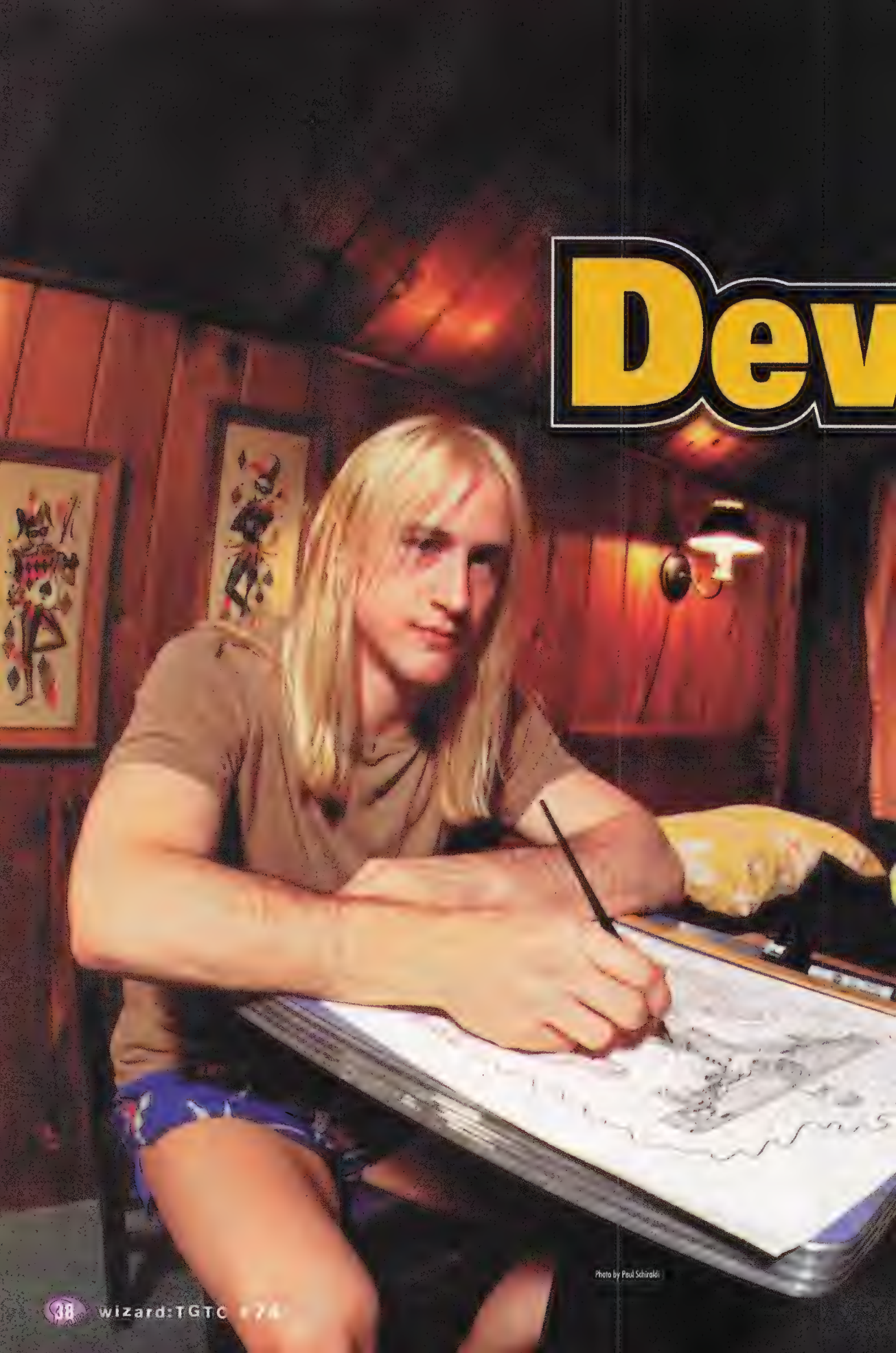


Photo by Paul Schiraldi

Arrested elopment

Forced to flee Florida after distributing obscene material, artist MICHAEL DIANA starts life anew in New York

By Adam Rogers

Years before Michael Diana became the first American comic book artist to be convicted of obscenity and legally prohibited from drawing, you could see the trouble coming. He was 8 or 9, and his art class was at the beach, collecting objects—shells, flotsam and the like—to mount in plaster and display. Diana picked up bits of broken glass, trash and a dead fish. "The fish actually started to rot and smell bad during the open house for the parents," Diana recalls, explaining, "I couldn't ignore the pollution and stuff just to get some shells."

That same instinct finally hit critical mass in late 1994, when Diana was 24. A jury in Pinellas County, Fla., where Diana lived with his father, convicted the young artist of distributing obscene materials in the form of his fanzine *Boiled Angel*, a collection of striking and nauseating stories and cartoons. Diana draws graphic depictions of sexual violence, genitalia, bodily fluids…if your mom found this stuff in your room, you'd have some serious explaining to do. His sentence, though, was almost as outlandish: In addition to a $3,000 fine and 1,200 hours of community service, Diana was told to get a psychological evaluation, take a course in journalism ethics, have no contact with anyone under 18 years old, and draw nothing obscene ever again. Today, five years after the charges were filed and six months after Diana lost an appeal, he's sharing a house in a town called Malverne on Long Island, N.Y. And this soft-spoken 28-year-old has become something of a poster boy for freedom of expression.

Legally prohibited from drawing anything "obscene," Diana (at left) has become comics' poster boy for the First Amendment.

When Diana hit his teens, he started photocopying his work at the police station where his mother worked as a secretary. He'd pass out the results to friends. In 1988, at 18, Diana and a friend who worked at a print shop compiled their comics and published their first fanzine. "After that, I just knew that was how I would let other people see my work," Diana says. "By the end, I had a steady number of people, and a few of them I still know today." At that time, Diana was sending out some 300 copies of *Boiled Angel*, mostly to other artists and people interested in 'zines, who'd seen Diana's work and written to the address on the back for more.

The problems began when a California subscriber had a copy confiscated by a Highway Patrol officer, who thought he saw in some of the images reflections of the arrangements of bodies in a series of then-unsolved killings at the University of Florida at Gainesville—and Diana's address was on the back. The cop sent the 'zine back to Florida, where police tested Diana's blood against samples from the crime scene. They cleared him, but copies of *Boiled Angel*—obtained by a sheriff's deputy pretending to be a reader—found their way to then-Assistant State Attorney Stuart Baggish. "I'm not some hypersensitive milquetoast who blanches at the first sight of something that's outside the realm of normalcy," says Baggish, now a private defense lawyer. "But [*Boiled Angel*] amounts to nothing more than an assault on the senses whose sole purpose is to offend."

Baggish applied Diana's work to the Miller Test, the legal definition of obscenity in the United States since the 1973 Supreme Court case Miller v. California. To fail, the work in question has to lack literary, political, artistic and scientific value; offend community standards; and show a shameful, lustful or prurient interest in sex.

Doing Time

A rundown of events surrounding Michael Diana's controversial fanzine

June 1988
Changes name of first 'zine, *Angel F****, to *Boiled Angel*

September 1988
Distributes *Boiled Angel #1*

December 1990
Arrested for Gainesville serial killings; cleared of charges two days later

March 1993
Receives summons to appear on obscenity charges, based on evidence collected during Gainesville killings investigation

March 22, 1994
Obscenity trial begins

March 25, 1994
Found guilty after 90 minutes of deliberations

March 28, 1994
Sentenced after a weekend in jail—highlights include a $3,000 fine, 1,200 hours of community service, no contact with anyone under 18 and not being allowed to draw anything obscene ever again

May 9, 1994
Motion for appeal submitted

April 1996
Moves from Florida to New York City's Lower East Side

December 1996
Moves to Malverne, Long Island, N.Y.

January 9, 1997
Appeal denied; finding of lower court is upheld

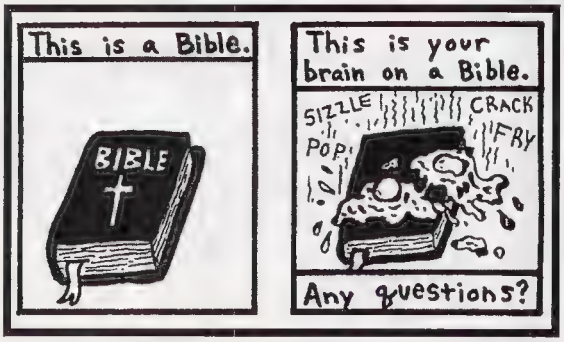
May 16, 1997
Petition for writ of certiorari (asking Supreme Court to hear case) filed

June 27, 1997
Supreme Court denies request to hear case ■ *AR*

The jury agreed with Baggish's view that *Boiled Angel* was obscene.

Why draw such grotesque stuff? "Even when it was social commentary, it had something to do with my life at the time," Diana says. As a Florida drawl creeps into his vowels, his stringy, bleached hair never seems to fall into his eyes. "It was more to get my feelings out in a way that wasn't harmful to other people." So, for example, Diana links his cartoons of priests raping altar boys to a series of arrests of child-molesting priests, and to the fact that his parents forced him to attend church. "I feel like there are some people who need to be shocked just so they can kind of wake up and see what's going on around them," he adds.

When he was still in Florida, Diana had to hide his artwork once the ruling came down, and so he put it in storage. While pressure and publicity forced Diana to leave Florida—fire officials condemned his house after complaints from neighbors, and once he and his family were evicted, the fire department razed the building—he never felt like much of a Floridian, even before the trial. "In Florida, the attitude was that I'm trying to stir up trouble, make people commit these crimes," Diana says. "In New York, they understand it's just artwork. I don't have people pointing at me and whispering I'm a serial killer."



Samples of Diana's work. Most are too obscene to even show at all.

Diana continues to cartoon and paint. And while his themes have remained largely the same, he sometimes uses fluorescent colors nowadays. He occasionally sells paintings, and supplements that income by dancing in "little pants" around a pole on a bar Friday nights at a downtown Manhattan club. It's enough to pay rent. When he's not working on a painting, he's likely to be weeding his backyard vegetable garden. He still hasn't taken that ethics class or gotten the psych evaluation (he took the tests but couldn't pay, so the psychiatrist never submitted the results). And many legal experts agree that prohibiting Diana from drawing is unconstitutional prior restraint—you can't keep someone from publishing something that "might" be obscene.

Despite the upholding of Diana's conviction, his story rolls on. With the help of the Northampton, Mass.-based Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, Diana asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear his case in mid-May; unfortunately, his appeal was turned down in June. The CBLDF got Diana his lawyer and paid his legal fees, and Diana is serving the community service portion of his sentence by working for the non-profit organization, staffing booths and speaking at comic conventions. Not exactly the spirit of the sentence, agrees CBLDF Executive Director Susan Alston. "But hey," she adds, "the spirit of the sentence stinks."

Diana's work is reminiscent of nothing so much as the sophomoric drawings covering the notes of that weird guy in the back of the classroom who never pays attention. But the level of attention Diana has achieved isn't in concordance with that stereotype. Shy and sensitive as he seems, Diana has responded to his conviction in probably the only way he can: by continuing his art. He's working on a short animated piece for a documentary a friend is filming about his case. He's sending some videos he made to a film festival in Chicago next year, and working on enough paintings to do a full-on New York gallery show. He's even thinking about trying sculpture.

"When I was in [jail, for four days before my sentencing], I wanted to write some things down. I went through every channel and I couldn't even get a pencil and paper," Diana says. "I was worried it would be three years of not being able to draw anything. But I knew if I wasn't in jail, they wouldn't be able to stop me."

A frequent contributor to Newsweek, *Adam Rogers has never drawn an obscene thing in his life.*

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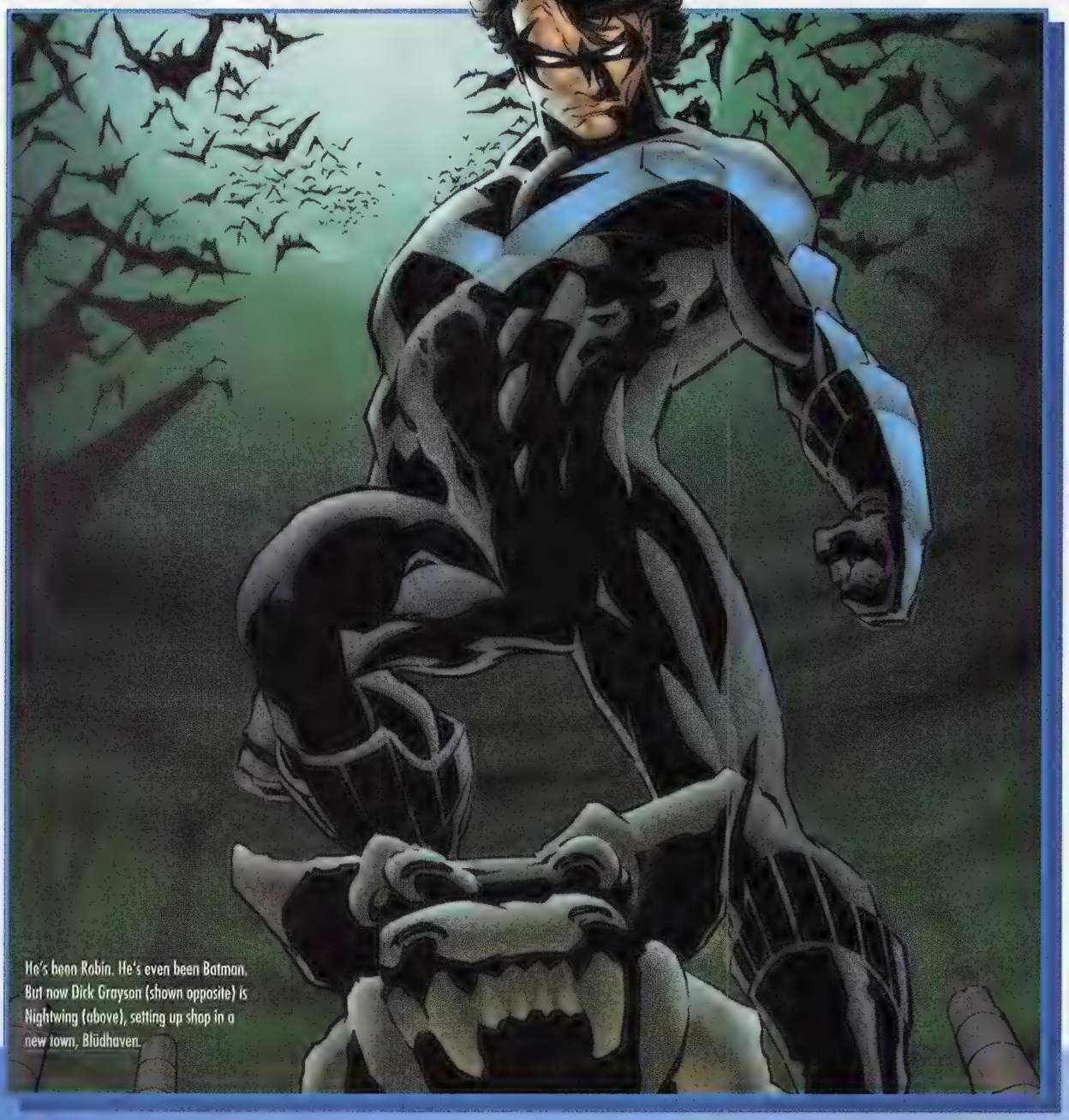

He's been Robin. He's even been Batman. But now Dick Grayson (shown opposite) is Nightwing (above), setting up shop in a new town, Blüdhaven.

BIRD

From out of the shadow of the Bat, Dick Grayson flies on his own as NIGHTWING

BY SCOTT BRICK

ROBIN IS HISTORY.

Dick Grayson isn't The Boy Wonder anymore. He isn't "Batman's old sidekick" either or "Bruce Wayne's young ward" or leader of the Teen Titans or any of the stuff he used to be. He's his own man now, smashing heads in a new town just down the river from Gotham City. He's sporting a new name, and finally starring in his own self-titled book—*Nightwing*.

Nightwing? If the original Robin needed an upgrade to make him a '90s kinda guy, why not make him Robin, the Post-Adolescent Wonder? The Adult Wonder? Even the Geriatric Wonder? (He is 67, after all. He was 10 when Robin first debuted in 1940, so you do the math.) How did Grayson's 57-year journey through adolescence take him from being Robin to Nightwing? And, more importantly, why give him his own book now?

"He was the most popular character in the DC Universe without his own series," says Chuck Dixon, *Nightwing*'s writer. "We'd get letters, constantly saying, 'When is he going to get his own book?' I think we waited until the proper time, until he was back in the Bat-fold. He's got a great past and he comes to his own book with all that history."

As a child, Grayson watched his parents plummet to their deaths, their trapeze act sabotaged by mobsters. Taken in by millionaire Bruce Wayne, who obviously saw his own parents' murder reflected in the boy's eyes, Grayson donned the red, yellow and green of Robin, the Boy Wonder.

For 44 years (in our time anyway), Grayson was a constant in Batman's life, going to school by day, but learning the most valuable information by night—how to throw his shoulder into a punch for maximum effect, how to anticipate the Joker's next move or how to survive a 10-story drop when his Batrope breaks. While Batman struck terror into the hearts of criminals, Robin scoffed at danger as the laughing, fighting young daredevil.

But the partnership came to a screeching halt when, at 19, Robin was shot by the Joker. Batman overreacted by firing his partner, claiming he could no longer put a child in jeopardy. So Grayson moved out on his own, soon becoming leader of the newest incarnation of the Teen Titans.

Something was wrong, though. Still wearing the Robin costume after splitting with Batman, everyone still saw him as a sidekick. So, in 1984, after four decades of wearing green Speedos, Grayson became Nightwing.

Years later, Grayson would try to wed his teammate and longtime girlfriend, the incredibly gorgeous alien Starfire. Shortly after, his leadership of the Teen Titans got yanked away by the government taskforce Checkmate and given to one of his oldest friends, Roy Harper, a.k.a. Arsenal (formerly Speedy). To make matters worse, Grayson and Starfire soon broke up. Suddenly, Grayson was all alone, convinced he was a loser. Then, while Wayne was busy healing that little broken back problem of his in 1993's epic story "Knightfall," he asked a newcomer named Azrael to substitute for him as Batman. Even after all those years, Grayson still wasn't Wayne's first choice—talk about kicking a guy when he's down.

Realizing his mistake, Wayne kicked

Bruce and Dick's relationship is a lot like father and son (above) while Dick is like an older brother to Robin (below).

Azrael's butt and asked his former ward to step into the Batboots. During 1994's "Prodigal" storyline, Grayson finally graduated—the original Boy Wonder became Batman, with the new Robin, Timothy Drake, by his side. "We got to see Dick Grayson as Batman," says Dixon with infectious enthusiasm. "We got to see that he had the chops. That was no surprise to the readers, though. They knew he could do it."

Grayson succeeded as a temporary Batman, but afterwards, he was still in Wayne's enormous shadow. Despite the name and costume change, people still judged him as Batman's former sidekick. Those who managed to avoid calling him Robin out of habit always threw in a disclaimer. He was Nightwing, Batman's old partner.

Well, not any more. Since getting his own series, Nightwing's become his own man. Dixon emphasizes, "[Grayson's] not going to have a Batcave 30 miles out of town. He's not going to have a Batmobile. He's going to try to blend into the city, to camouflage himself more. He takes an entirely different approach. When you read *Nightwing*, it's not *Batman Junior*. This is a completely different guy."

His ego fueled by his success as Batman, Grayson is now fighting crime in a new city, Blüdhaven, a miserable dive just south of Gotham. Why the change? Says artist Scott McDaniel, "You've got to get him away from Batman. He's always going to be in Batman's shadow if he's working in Gotham; he won't get any respect."

To go along with the new city, Nightwing's got an updated crimefighting style, relying more on Grayson's circus background than on Batarangs and Batropes. He doesn't swing down from rooftops anymore, he just ricochets between alley walls until he hits the ground. "To tell the story," says McDaniel, "you have to remember that the acrobatic part of his background is integral to who he is today. Even the things that don't call for specific gymnastic maneuvers, he'll do with incredible grace and fluidity."

To capture the right mood for Nightwing's new digs, McDaniel draws from what he calls his Nightwing Folder. This four-inch thick binder, filled with photo references of 1950s New York, serves as inspiration for Blüdhaven, a city that visually exudes corruption. "It just looks so old, decrepit and worn out," says McDaniel. "It just feels like Blüdhaven."

Grayson originally came to Blüdhaven to solve the mystery of 21 corpses that floated north into Gotham Harbor, soon realizing he's completely out of his element. There's no Batman to rely on here, no Commissioner Gordon, no stoolies for information and no Alfred to bring him milk and cookies. Nightwing couldn't be happier. Grayson, on the other hand...

"He's back in fighting trim, he's pretty confident in what he does, but his personal life is still a mess," says Dixon. "He doesn't know who Dick Grayson is anymore."

So who is Grayson? With a childhood so similar to Bruce's, you'd think he'd would be more like Batman, but he's not. "He grew up seeing this brooding, self-tormented guy all the time," says Dixon. "Sometimes you see things your parents did and you go, 'I'm not going to be like that.' I think Dick made a conscious effort to say, 'I'm not going to let it eat me alive the way Bruce has.' He's not as uncomfortable being Dick Grayson as Batman is being Bruce Wayne.

"Dick Grayson is not that much of a masquerade," continues Dixon, "whereas Bruce Wayne is a complete sham. Dick Grayson can let off steam. He can lighten up a little bit. Dick knows that you gotta take the costume off once in a while and just go to a movie."

While the distance between Grayson and Wayne has grown in terms of miles, it's dwindled emotionally. Grayson is now a trusted soldier in Wayne's fight against the enemy army; whenever Batman needs him, Nightwing is there. Recently they even managed to admit they love one another like father and son. Even though, in all their bitterness and angst, all they could manage to call it was "the L-word."

"I think their relationship is like a lot of parent/child relationships where Bruce just feels Dick is stronger than that," says Dixon, "that he didn't need those kind of reassurances, when every child does. Bruce always thinks he's going to insult Dick by saying things like that."

Moving to Blüdhaven has done wonders for Nightwing, surprising when you consider just how diseased a place it is. Chief Redhorn rules the police force with a well-greased palm. His right-hand man, Dudley Soames, plays several sides against the middle, doing the Chief's dirty work, but also working for super-strong genius Blockbuster, an old

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DUKE ELRIC art by JOHN RIDGWAY
The doomed albino reclaims his howling black runeblade Stormbringer

COVERS BY WALTER SIMONSON

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Batman villain vying to take over as Blüdhaven's new crime boss. Whatever happens with Blockbuster, it seems likely Soames will land on his feet. "Soames is evolving into a major villain," says Dixon. "He'll come out of his cocoon into something completely different."

So what's to keep Grayson from heading back upriver when the Blüdhaven mystery gets solved? Well, there's his landlord, Bridget Clancy, who seems likely to take over as his lady love. But the challenge of being the Batman of a different city also appeals to Grayson. Says Dixon, "He sees this town is rotten to the core, and has no one to protect it. Everybody in Blüdhaven is a predator. There's no one there to protect the innocents. There's no Commissioner Gordon or Harvey Bullock or Huntress or Robin. He's alone, and if he leaves, he's left the town worse than when he arrived."

Nightwing will also have his very own rogues gallery soon. Says Dixon, "There's a pair of twin female acrobats called Double Dare who will give Nightwing a run for his money in more departments than one. We've got Man-Bat showing up, just because I like Man-Bat and I can't wait to see Scott McDaniel draw him. Along with Man-Bat comes Deathstroke The Terminator, and a housing project cop named Cisco Blaine. The readers are going to have to make up their minds about him."

There will also be key appearances by some of Grayson's old friends, and possibly lovers as well. "We'll see a lot of [the Teen Titans] show up in Nightwing," says Dixon. "But pretty much, we wanted to establish him in his own continuity, his own book, his own setting, and not too many ties to the past. Starting off fresh."

Batman will ultimately come down to Blüdhaven and discover the city's in good hands. Says Dixon, "Nightwing thinks, 'Batman thinks I'm screwing up and he's here to back me up.' Nightwing resents it, but that really isn't why Batman's there at all. We work through all those issues, and he comes out of that story feeling a lot better about himself and his relationship with Batman and Bruce Wayne. He wants Blüdhaven to be his own town, and he proves to Batman that Blüdhaven isn't Gotham. It's a whole different thing and he has a handle on it, as much as you can have a handle on a town like Blüdhaven."

So if Nightwing isn't Robin, and he isn't Batman Jr., then what is he? According to Dixon, he's a Prince Regent assigned by the king (Batman) to rule an outlaw province. "I don't know where that reference came from, but it works," he says. "I just began to think of Dick as a Prince. After all, he's heir to the throne." W

California-based writer Scott Brick, also known as "The Brickman," used to run around in green Speedos himself until that horrific chafing incident.

A Tale of Two Cities

Nightwing may've been Batman's partner in the past, but he's since gone his own way, moving to Blüdhaven. Located down river from Gotham City, Blüdhaven is just as seedy, if not seedier. So *Wizard* decided to put the two cities on the block and compare 'em. Where'd we rather live? Let's just say Metropolis is looking real good right about now.

ATMOSPHERE

GOTHAM CITY: A Gothic nightmare. Long shadows, no matter the time of day.
BLÜDHAVEN: Gotham's ugly sister city. Children's cries go ignored.

CRIME

GOTHAM CITY: Relatively safe in daytime. Crime rules the streets at night. Avoid alleyways.
BLÜDHAVEN: Pray your car doesn't break down. Police get a percentage of every heist.

POLICE

GOTHAM CITY: Batman is Commissioner Gordon's oldest friend.
BLÜDHAVEN: Chief Redhorn ordered Nightwing's death.

PURPOSE

GOTHAM CITY: Founded by Solomon Wayne. A financial community rivaling New York and Metropolis.
BLÜDHAVEN: Originally a whaling town. Later became Asbestos Town, U.S.A.

ARCHITECTURE

GOTHAM CITY: Designed by architect Cyrus Pinkney. A living entity to repel evil. Gargoyles frighten people onto paths of righteousness. Rounded edges confuse malevolent beings. Windowless facades lock in virtue.
BLÜDHAVEN: Nothing built to last. Too much sand mixed into the cement. Neighborhoods shadowed by massive highways—a reminder to get out of town. ■ *SB*

Nightwing is "heir" to Batman's throne, according to Dixon.

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Wizard *casts the* Batman *franchise!*

Casting call

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos not credited are from the Everett Collection.

Okay, who thought "Batman & Robin" really sucked?

You're not alone—and here's why. Too many characters (there are *nine* central characters each vying to unload their excessive baggage). Embarrassingly clichéd dialogue ("Ev-ree-bod-ee…CHILL!"). Choppy editing (did Poison Ivy *have* to blow her hypno-dust a billion times in a five-minute period?). Garishly distracting sets and costumes (Poison Ivy and Bane wearing inane gorilla suits flanked by erotic dancers at a fund raiser?). Insultingly campy plot points (the origin of Batgirl is…*Alfred gives her a disk with all of Batman's secrets???*). And poor casting (sorry, George Clooney just doesn't cut it as a smirking Batman).

We think comic fans have endured enough of Hollywood's "Dark Knight Detective." So much so, we're gonna pretend we're buying the license to make movies, starting from scratch to do the job right. And it starts with recasting *everybody*. And then coming up with stories to fit Bat-baddies, old *and* new. So grab your popcorn and utility belt—here's *our* take on the perfect Bat-franchise…

The Heroes

BATMAN

You need a WASP to play this role. Alec Baldwin not only fits the look of playboy Bruce Wayne, but also has the intensity and gravelly voice to play a vigilante that'll scare the piss outta you. Didn't float your boat in "The Shadow"? Maybe it's because he woulda been a better Batman.

ROBIN

Just like in the comics, we're going for the innocence of a 14-year-old to offset the grimmer Batman. Kyle Gibson from TV's "Nick Freno, Licensed Teacher" has shown he's got the savvy to be the Boy Wonder.

NIGHTWING

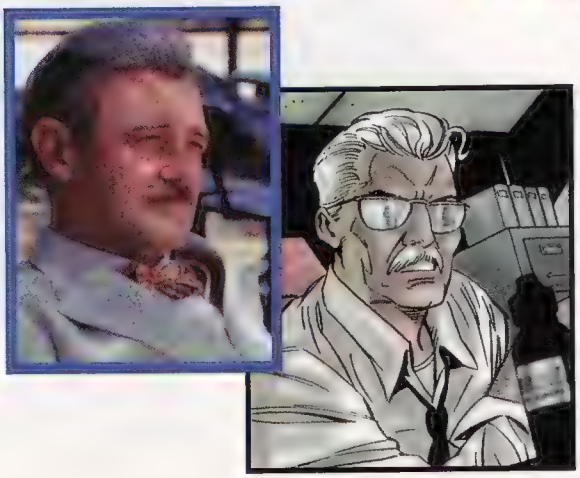
Actor Jason Gedrick ("Murder One," "Iron Eagle") is a pretty boy like Dick Grayson, but looks like he also has the mileage to play the former Robin.

ALFRED

Need a trusty British butler? Heck, Anthony Hopkins did that schtick in "Remains of the Day" and made it look easy.

BATGIRL

Robyn Lively has proven she can be bright and bubbly with a strange curiosity (like in "Karate Kid 3"). Give this redhead a *real* Batgirl costume and she's all set.



COMMISSIONER GORDON

Jim Gordon's a no-nonsense, hands-on type of lawman. That's why John Mahoney ("Frasier") is the perfect guy for this role. He's played hardasses who've also shown a kind side.

The Villains

© Inke Loss/Outline

JOKER

Forget the Joe Chill origin used in "Batman"—Joker's origin from *Batman: The Killing Joke* is too cool not to use. And, an actor like Willem Dafoe ("Speed 2") fits that story better than Jack Nicholson. Plus, Dafoe's already got the built-in killer smile.

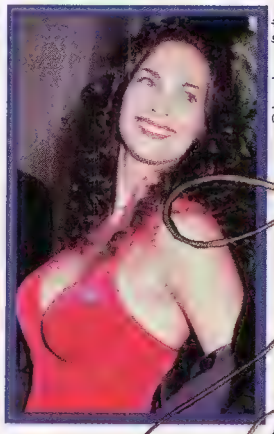
© Anne Marie Fox/Outline

PENGUIN

A whiny villain who's taken over the mob? C'mon! Joe Pesci ("Goodfellas") is at his best doing that! We'd dump the asinine penguin patrol with missiles on their backs and make this guy a winner!

CATWOMAN

Sexy and seductive is Catwoman in a nutshell. It also captures the flair of B-movie queen Julie Strain, who has tempted a man or 2,000 in her career as a "bad girl." Screw the "resurrected by cats" movie version—we like the master thief set-up best.



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TWO-FACE

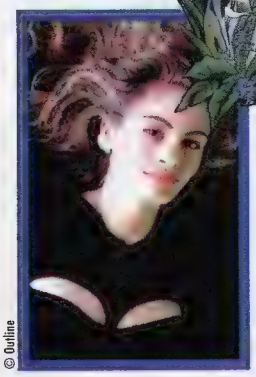
This time, we want a guy with two faces who's *not* a Joker knock-off. Since Mel Gibson played a similar role in "The Man Without a Face" and has shown in the "Lethal Weapon" flicks he can go from sane to nutso, we figgered he's our man for the former Gotham City D.A.

THE RIDDLER

No stranger to creepy smart guys, Kevin Spacey ("The Usual Suspects") could do the Riddler in his sleep. No over-the-top antics like in "Batman Forever"—our Riddler would be an intellectual thug trying to outwit his opponent, namely Batman.

POISON IVY

An alluring, *intellectual* redhead? We're sure if you give Julia Roberts a mean streak, she'll grow on you as Dr. Pamela Isley's alter ego.

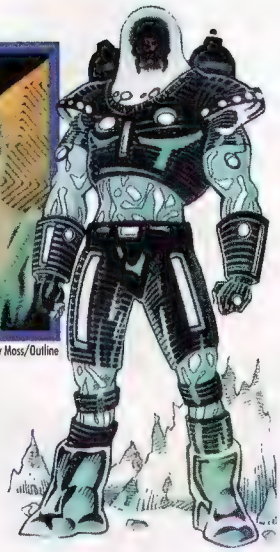


© Outline

MR. FREEZE

Freeze is an icy intellectual and if you twist Patrick Stewart's role as Capt. Picard in "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and add a dash of his part in "Conspiracy Theory," you've got your tragic villain *without* stupid one-liners.

© Gary Moss/Outline



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BANE

This guy should be a physical giant, but *not* a monosyllabic buffoon like in "Batman & Robin." He's actually pretty smart. We think wrestler Steve McMichael has the musculature and the perfect look for our Bat-behemoth.

The New Villains

"There are no good villains left," you say? Get outta town! If handled right, here're three villains who could give Bats three great flicks with a different atmosphere for each. Why not exploit Batman's versatility as a character?

KILLER CROC

Imagine an "Aliens"-esque suspense story where Batman must wade through the Gotham sewers to take down the terrifying Killer Croc. It'd be a really cool movie that would add to the versatility of Batman. Wrestler Marcus "Buff" Bagwell has the build and the attitude to make even Batman wary before facing him.

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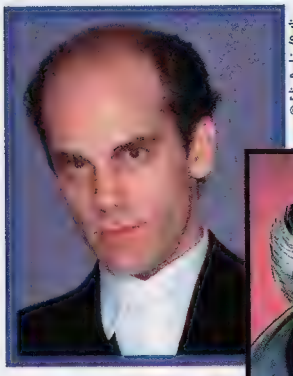

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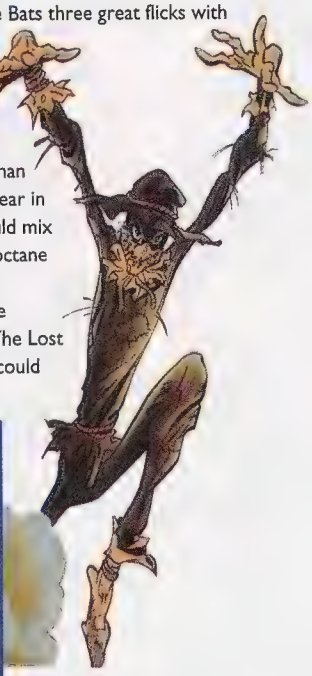
SCARECROW

An insane psychologist, Jonathan Crane uses toxins to create fear in his victims. This Bat-flick would mix psychological drama with hi-octane action exposing Batman to everything he fears most. Like Scarecrow, Jeff Goldblum ("The Lost World") is lanky, gangly and could be really spooky if he tried.



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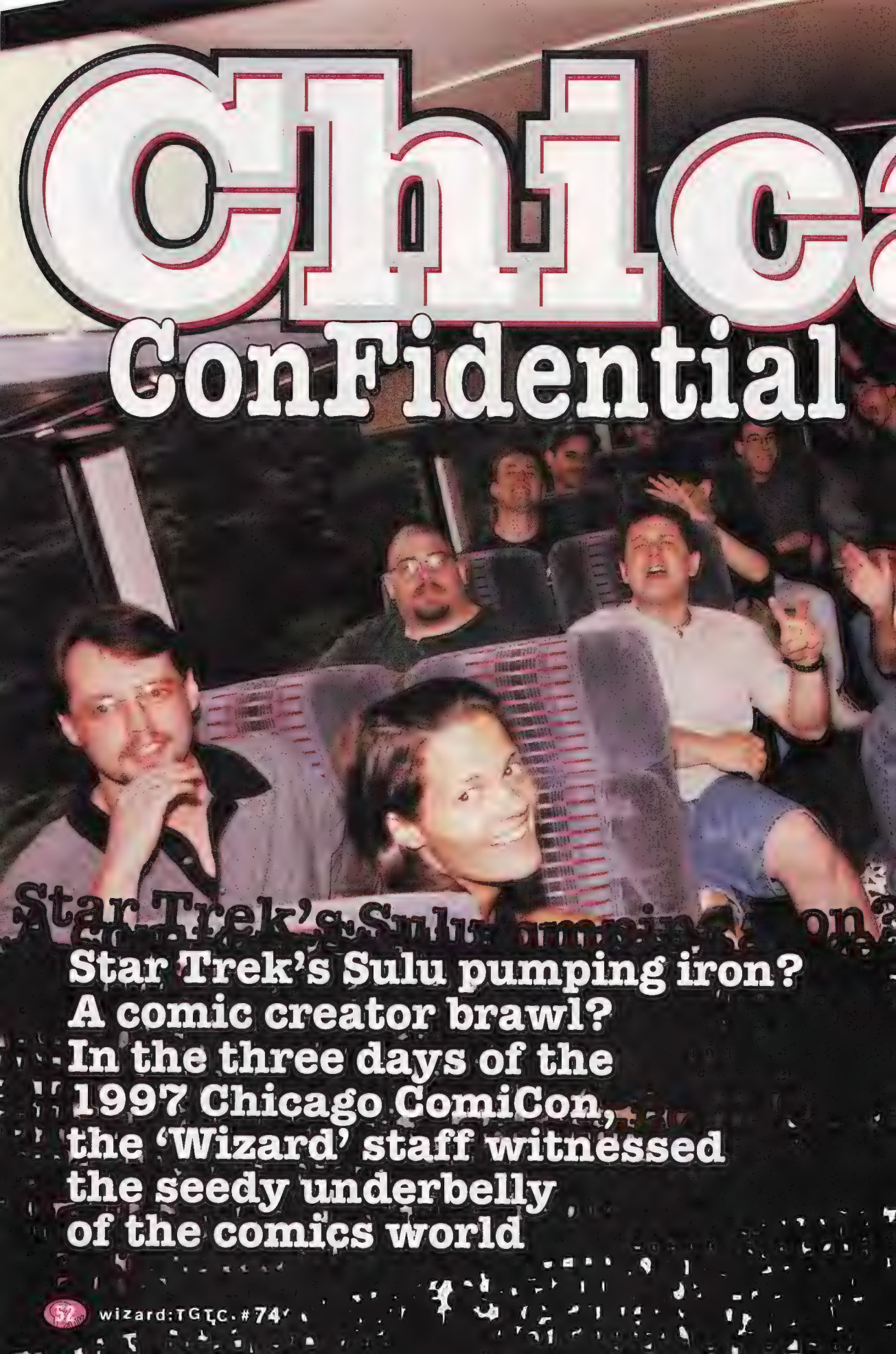
RA'S AL GHUL

All he wants to do is destroy the world and make it over in his twisted image. He's Batman's intellectual equal who would take Batman out of Gotham, using the world as his arena to fight the Dark Knight. These evil madman types come easy to John Malkovich, who's shown that side in "In the Line of Fire" and "Con Air." W

Chica

ConFidential



Star Trek's Sulu pumping iron? A comic creator brawl? In the three days of the 1997 Chicago ComiCon, the 'Wizard' staff witnessed the seedy underbelly of the comics world

ago

We never realized what we were getting ourselves into. For those of you who may have missed our incredibly obtrusive four-page house ads, an update: We bought the Chicago ComiCon. And planning a major comic convention is only slightly less painful than taking a boiling-oil enema. And once the planning was done and the con was ready to start, the real anxiousness began. We piled no less than 34 Wizard Press staffers on one pressurized airplane and headed to the Chicago suburb of Rosemont on July 4 weekend.

What you're about to read is an account of what happened. No names have been changed, not even to protect the guilty. As you can see, the first-ever *Wizard*-run con was full of hilarious hijinks, perilous pitfalls and yes—a whole lotta love. So read on. But look out for the photo of Buddy Scalera's gut coming up. Don't say we didn't warn ya.

By The *Wizard* Staff

THURSDAY, JULY 3

12:10 p.m.: We rent a bus to ship the staffers from Wizard Press HQ to the airport. To no one's surprise, the ride is 60 minutes of juvenile, junior high school antics as paper-wad fights, off-color jokes and flatulence—all to the background music of old superhero jingles ("Doc Bruce Banner, belted by gamma rays…")—make the ride feel more like 60 days. That and *ToyFare* Editor Scott Beatty and *Wizard*, *ToyFare* and *InQuest* Editor-in-Chief

Pat McCallum learn the hard way why it's not smart to sit by the bus toilet. Peee-yoopies!

2:29 p.m.: After a brief check-in and making sure nobody got lost on the way, our plane takes off from lovely and aromatic Newark International Airport. In flagrant violation of FAA rules, some staff members sneak booze on to the plane. Highlights of the plane trip: booze-sneaker and *Wizard* Senior Managing Editor Joe Yanarella totally belittles another booze-sneaker, *Wizard* Senior Staff Writer Jim McLauchlin, while Jim's trying to pick up a non-staffer enough to have a seat next to him; the ice-cube skirmish that started with McCallum dropping an cube down the back of Wizard Press Online Editor Buddy Scalera's back; and *Wizard* Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson's discussion of the book he's currently reading, *The Natural History of Love*.

All in all, it just seems like a continuation of the bus ride.

George Takei (Sulu from "Star Trek") not only pumped iron, but got the babes too!

4:36 p.m.: Landfall! A smooth landing at O'Hare Airport and we're off to the Hotel Sofitel. Someone must be screwing with us. The entire *Wizard* staff is on the road and they book us in a FRENCH-THEMED HOTEL? Heads will roll! This is not good! The front door even says "*Poussez*" instead of "Push." Oh, well. At least they give us free bread.

5:03 p.m.: Ever wonder how they enforce those elevator signs that say "Weight Limit 1,800 Pounds"? Chunkified editor Buddy finds out. He tries to get on a hotel elevator already occupied by several staffers and two old, fat women. As soon as he steps in, an elevator alarm goes into overdrive. Buddy has no choice but to get off. It's okay. It probably wouldn't hurt him to take the stairs anyway.

5:24 p.m.: Everyone's meeting someone in Chicago! We're getting together with old boyfriends, old girlfriends, old college buddies. But price guide guru Lars Pearson has arranged to meet up with...his mom? Yeah, his mom. And she brought a Twinkie cake. Walk on the wild side, Lars.

5:45 p.m.: Convention guest George Takei ("Sulu" from "Star Trek") asks a group of people including *Wizard* Copy Editor Marc Wilkofsky and staffers Phil Colligan, Dan DiGiacomo and Glenn Haight where the hotel gym is. They give him directions, then the bizarre voyeurs watch Sulu pump iron.

6:30 p.m.: McCallum, Beatty and *ToyFare* Assistant Editor Tom Palmer Jr. crash into Lars' and *Wizard* Staff Writer Matt Senreich's room, empty the mini-bar of cashews, weird French chocolate thingies and Diet Pepsi...and race back out.

Buddy struts his, uh, stuff on the dance floor at our July 4 party.

7:53 p.m.: A large contingent of the *Wizard* staff head to Downtown Chicago to Ed Debevics, a restaurant known for its incredibly rude service, to impress Top Cow marketing whizzes Kate Sherwood and Tim Hernandez. Ever looking after his waistline, Buddy asks a waitress, "What's good to eat here?" The waitress replies, "The food across the street, fat boy."

Meanwhile, McCallum spends his time sneaking fries into the shorts of Scalera, the shoes of Glenn Haight and the pockets of Marc Wilkofsky. Wilko's had ketchup on them.

9:43 p.m.: After the gang breaks up outside Ed Debevics, the crew splits in two. Half of the crew (we'll call them the Benevolent Bunch consisting of McCallum, Senreich, Colligan, DiGiacomo, Mikey "The Knife" Fasolo and Arlene So) head off to Virtual World to play the elaborate video game *Battletech*.

Meanwhile, the other half (The Cockeyed Crew of Yanarella, *Wizard* Editor Brian Cunningham, Assistant Editor Andrew Kardon, Administrative Assistant Jen Cavallo, Palmer, Scalera, Haight, *ToyFare* Copy Editor Tom Root along with ace photog Paul Schiraldi) go across the street to Hooters in the pursuit of more beer.

9:55 p.m. Arrggghh! *Battletech* closes at 10 p.m.! *Sigh* In lieu of *Battletech*, the Benevolent Bunch heads out to catch the fireworks show (it was July 3, remember) and, after a cabbie took 'em as far he could due to the roads being blocked off, bad directions from a Chicago cop and a seven-block mad dash to the show, arrived just in time to see the last of the fireworks go off. Oh, well. They got a good workout. Almost as good as Sulu's, we hear.

FRIDAY, JULY 4

2:00 a.m.: After assorted misadventures in downtown Chitown, the Bunch heads back to our French hotel—only to bump into the Cockeyed Crew as they arrive from their more liquor-induced hijinks. The result: the smart people go to sleep and the bad people awaken *Wizard* Copy Editor Greg Orlando, force their way into his room, empty his mini-bar and head to the 10th floor for some late-night swimming in the hotel pool! Joined by some Top Cow folks, cannonballs and chicken fights are the on the menu.

4:09 a.m.: The still-conscious staffers realize that they have to get up in a little less than four hours to prepare for the con. Say goodnight, Gracie.

10:00 a.m.: Ladies and gentlemen, start

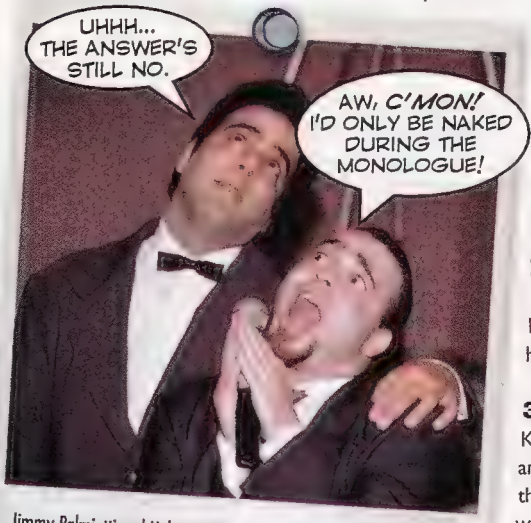
your engines! The con starts as the first of 26,000 fans streams into the Rosemont Convention Center. Either signing autographs for the fans or just wandering the aisles looking for stuff to buy are industry celebs like Jim Lee, Peter David, Joe Madureira and Kurt Busiek, and even stars like Lou Ferrigno, George Takei and David Prowse (Darth Vader). Also on the prowl are costumed models dressed as Wolverine, Klingons, Batgirl and Shi.

12:00 p.m.: The *Wizard* booth is hoppin' as fans wait in line to spin the "Wheel of Doom." Here's how it works: you give whichever *Wizard* staffer's manning the wheel a topic (anything from comics, sci-fi to aluminum siding). We ask you a question based on that topic and, if you get it right, you spin the wheel and win comics, T-shirts and stuff (all depending what the wheel lands on when you spin it). You get it wrong and we hit you with a "physical challenge" where we make you embarrass yourself in front of everyone for a chance to spin the wheel. Physical challenge highlights include: getting a fan to sit in the autographing Mike Wieringo's lap and wave to us, singing "I'm a Little Teapot" through a megaphone as everyone looked on, and giving Glenn Haight, busy transmitting the con live through Wizard World Online (WizardTGTC@aol.com), a scalp-massage. *Brrrrrr!*

2:30 p.m.: Between booth-duty and meetings with industry-folk, the staffers do their own shopping at the con. In fact, Andrew Kardon completed his Silver Age *Captain America* back-issue collection, Pat McCallum bought a mid-'60s JLA "rock"-album (including the smash hit…"Metamorpho"!), and Brian Cunningham scammed the entire original 40-issue Michelinie-Romita Jr.-Layton run on *Iron Man* for, like, 30 bucks.

6:30 p.m.: The *Wizard* Fan Awards are underway! Jimmy Palmiotti of *Ash* fame and his partner, painter Nelson DeCastro, do a bang-up job of hosting the whole shindig. Marvel Comics cleans up (see "Wizard News" this issue) and Marc Wilko dances up a storm.

Speaking of storms, Scott Beatty is sitting in the audience and wearing shoes through the whole event, but his feet smell so bad, he's grossing out everyone near him. The stench is penetrating the fine Corinthian leather of his shoes. Staffers Cindy Emmert and Glenn Haight just up and leave, while editor Joe Yanarella takes it like a man, turning green all the while.



Jimmy Palmiotti and Nelson DeCastro bring some mirth and Sinatra to the *Wizard* Fan Awards.

7:32 p.m.: As Wilko exits the auditorium, a middle-aged man who resembles the Clown from Spawn approaches him. He identifies himself only as "The Collector" and tells Wilko his dance was sinful as that of the dreaded Jezebel and the Whore of Babylon. Wilko hobbles away as fast as his tired little legs can take him. (Later on, Greg Orlando pranks Wilko with a note from this "Collector" saying he wants to, uh, *talk* further about his blasphemous ways. Wilko isn't seen for the rest of the con.)

8:30 p.m.: Crank it up! The *Wizard* party is starting in the Sofitel Ballroom! Somehow we snookered Bacardi into giving us free hooch, so we invite all our buds to the joint for eating, drinking, dancing and general merriment. Three bystanders are injured when Buddy shows off his gelatinous gut during the conga line.

SATURDAY, JULY 5

12:08 a.m.: Party's over. We're kicked outta the ballroom.

12:36 p.m.: Glenn Haight meets his clone. We don't know his name, so we just call him "Glen."

3:53 p.m.: No lie. Andrew Kardon turns to Jim McLauchlin and asks, "Hey Jim—what was the name of that restaurant we went to last year where they made us wear pants?"

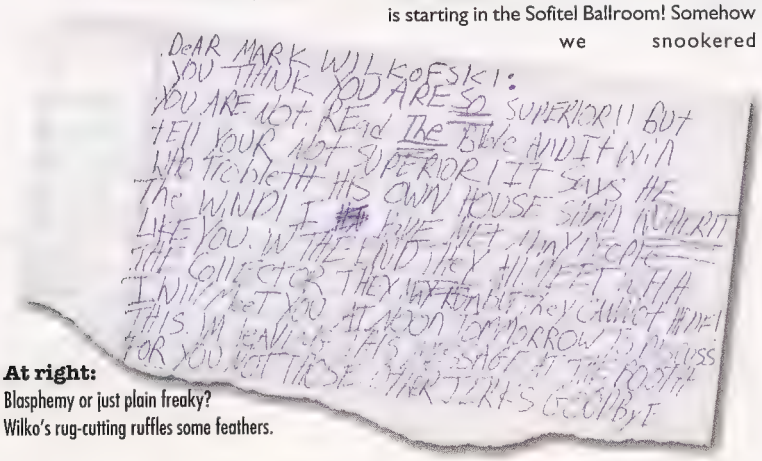
3:56 p.m.: Adam Kubert shows up at the *Wizard* booth for his one hour signing block. But he ain't alone. No sir—he's got a mini-cooler full of genuine White Castle hamburgers given to him by a fan who was aware of his love for those tasty treats. He asks if anyone wants any while they're hot; Brian Cunningham not only takes him up on the offer, but has Adam sign his burger carton.

4:57 p.m.: Hey, *Pitt* creator Dale Keown shows up at the *Wizard* booth for a surprise one hour's worth of signing! Wotta guy!

5:02 p.m.: Jim Lee turns the tables on our photographer, Paul Schiraldi. After having his mug shot snapped 53 kajillion times, Jim decides he wants to work the other end (of the camera). He takes some Schiraldi shots. Jim gets right into the mood, cooing "Work it, baby," and "Oh, the camera loves you" to Paul.

5:05 p.m.: Lou Ferrigno, TV's Incredible Hulk, won't pose for pictures with anyone unless he's paid $10. Cheapskate Fasolo will have none of this. He goes to shake Lou's massive hand, while DiGiacomo quickly snaps a picture and runs away. Lou angry! But Lou can't catch Dan! The score: *Wizard* 1, Hulk 0.

5:33 p.m.: At the "How to Create a Dynamic Cover" panel, *Uncanny X-Men* artist Joe Madureira explains how he drew his favorite cover, saying "On this piece, I did Magneto from behind." The crowd busts out laughing.


DEAR MARK WILKOFSKI:
YOU THINK YOU ARE SO SUPERIOR!! BUT
YOU ARE NOT. READ THE BIBLE AND IT WILL
TELL YOUR NOT SUPERIOR! IT SAYS HE
WHO TRIBLETH HIS OWN HOUSE SHALL INHERIT
THE WIND! I HAVE MET MANY LIKE
LIKE YOU. IN THE LAND THEY HAVE
THE COLLECTOR THEY HAVE FEET LIKE
I WILL MEET YOU AT ARON TOMORROW TO DISCUSS
THIS. WE WILL HAVE THIS MEETING AT THE BOOTH
FOR YOU. NOT THOSE OTHER JERKS. GOODBYE

At right:
Blasphemy or just plain freaky?
Wilko's rug-cutting ruffles some feathers.

6:00 p.m.: Time for "The McLauchlin Group," a spoof on the "McLaughlin Group" Sunday morning political talk show. Our comic pundits include *Incredible Hulk* writer Peter David, Awesome Entertainment Publisher Jeph Loeb, Acclaim Comics President Fabian Nicieza and *Captain America* writer Mark Waid. Debate is...heated, but a splendid time is had by all. One fan asks, "How much of a big rip-off is Agent America of Captain America?" A visibly pissed-off Loeb answers, "It's a rip-off, which is not to say that other patriotic characters like the Shield or USAgent aren't all variations on the same theme."

Things get so nuts that Nicieza sucker-punches David in the face! (Ah, they wuz only kiddin'. Looked real, though!)

8:19 p.m.: The wall comes tumbling down! Li'l Matt Senreich, who hasn't taken a drink in 10 years (!) is badgered by Jim Lee until he actually takes a sip of a cranberry juice and vodka at dinner at a local Morton's Steakhouse!

10:30 p.m.: Chewbacca's at the Cantina!! Peter Mayhew, who played Chewie in the Star Wars flicks, is lounging at the hotel bar. After hovering around him like the geeky fanboys we are, we snag his autograph and he tells us how much he hates the new Star Wars Chewbacca figure. "Too beefy." Though we don't agree, we ain't pickin' a fight with a Wookiee.

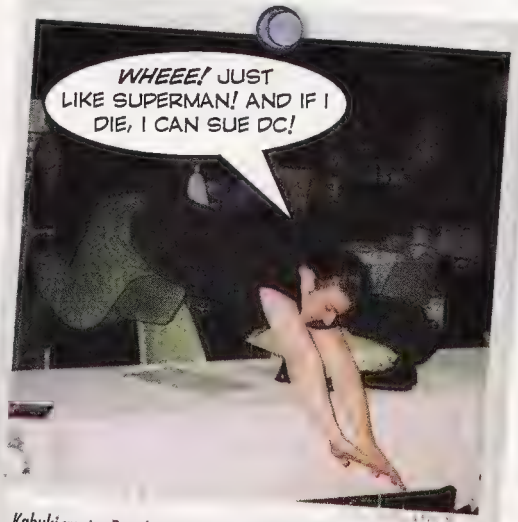
SUNDAY, JULY 6

2:54 a.m.: An impromptu meeting between the arguably conscious Jim McLauchlin and the newly shaven Alex Ross ends with the two confirming that an idea *Wizard* and Ross kicked around a year ago will see fruition by the end of the year in *Wizard*. Oooo...sound cool? It is. We'll keep you posted as it unfolds.

3:30 a.m.: Fifty percent of all Wizard Press staffers accounted for and snuggly tucked-away in their beds. The others are just...out there.

8:00 a.m.: *Wizard* Specials Editors Doug Goldstein and Matt Saunders and writer Matt Senreich catch up with the actors who played Darth Vader, Boba Fett and Chewbacca for breakfast. Special surprise guest at the restaurant: former Incredible Hulk, Lou Ferrigno! Doug, ever the gentleman, picks up Lou's tab and all he gets outta him is "thanks guys" and a wave. He's lucky he could mop the floor with alla us or we'd have kicked his ungrateful butt. "The Incredible Moocher" is more like it.

In a moment when they were all gettin' along, Waid (right) high-fives Loeb at The McLauchlin Group.



Kabuki creator David Mack worked hard to get his photo in *Wizard* (and it worked).

10:00 a.m.: The con's open for the last day! Exhausted from the grueling work-days and seemingly endless nights, the *Wizard* staff still manages to snag some cool swag like giant Australian Star Wars Taco Bell Action figures with drinking cup bodies, Spanish-released Teen Titans PVCs (Starfire!) and cheap (though cool) knock-off South American Batman and Robin toys ("Bat-Hero and Companion"). Though the con's a hoot, we're itching to get back home and into our beds. (Hey, it ain't easy stayin' out till 4 a.m. every night.)

12:30 p.m.: Whoops...physical challenge gone awry. As per McCallum and Senreich's instructions, a teenage fan goes over to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund's booth to harass them during—and this is where McCallum & Senreich claim ignorance—they were taping an interview for TV. So, as the fan interrupts and, pointing to the camera & tripod, asks the interviewer, "Is that one of them... y'know...flying saucers?" It's a lot funnier now than it was then.

2:00 p.m.: After three days of free convention "food" (all Wizard Press staffers got grub for free...not the perk you'd think it'd be), the majority of the staff could power the state of New Jersey with the most foul-smelling power source known to man. *Phewww!*

3:30 p.m.: *Kabuki*'s David Mack, wanting to get his photo in *Wizard*, takes a diving leap over his booth and almost kills a passing fanboy. Hey, we woulda put his photo in here for 20 bucks.

4:15 p.m.: "Runnn, git to duh chop-puhhh!" The staff pulls a mass exodus to catch a shuttle bus to the airport. Which we miss. While sitting sprawled outside the hotel waiting for the next one, we wave goodbye to industry pros and offer them chunks of Lars' leftover Twinkie cake. Everyone declines except *Invisibles* artist Phil Jimenez who grabs a slab and declares it "yummy." Yeah, but he draws a Vertigo book. He likes weird stuff.

6:50 p.m.: We board the plane, 90 percent of the staff falls asleep and the awake ones wave bye-bye to Chicago.

It was a great time, a great con and we loved it so much, we'll be back next year. Hey, we bought the damn thing, after all! Look for our next battery of obtrusive four-page house ads next year and we'll see you there! **W**

The Wizard *Staff is currently considered fugitives-at-large by the Rosemont Police Department. Since when is peeing in public illegal? Dogs do it.*

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The Powers That Be

IF YOU THINK SUPERPOWERS CAN'T EXIST IN THE REAL WORLD...

THINK AGAIN!

Photo: Paul Schiraldi

BY MIKE SEARLE

The Hulk heaves a tank at an infantry battalion. Daredevil senses the arc of a dagger in total darkness. The Flash runs across water like a skater on a frozen pond. Impossible, you say? These sights can only be found in comics?

Not if you live on *this* planet.

You may not believe it, but the real world's chock full of creatures and natural phenomena beyond your wildest imagination. Why, they're just as remarkable as the feats of your favorite superheroes. You've heard the old saying, "life's stranger than fiction"—well, in this case it's true. And after reading about these strange creatures of nature, you just may discover that the world of comics is closer to reality than you thought...

ENHANCED SENSES

Who comes to mind when you think of super-senses? There's Daredevil, whose radar sense enables him to detect the shifting mass of an oncoming van or the swing of a bat from behind. Then there's Wolverine, whose heightened senses can track down prey by scent. And of course, there's Spider-Man's spider-sense, which alerts him of nearby danger. But there are plenty of other real-life creatures with senses you just wouldn't believe.

SIGHT: Ever wonder how a hero like Batman continually spots and dodges those deadly attacks? It's not impossible to develop a formidable eyesight. A person with good vision standing on a mountain peak can, on a clear and moonless night, see a match struck as far as 50 miles away. On a normal day, however, birds can see three or four times better than us—a peregrine falcon can spot a pigeon five miles away.

NIGHT VISION: Can humans see as well as Nightcrawler at night? Yep. Given enough time to adjust to nighttime conditions, your eyes can see almost as well as an owl's in darkness.

FIELD OF VISION: How cool would it be to have 360-degree vision like Daredevil? Well, the woodcock bird has eyes set so far back on its head it truly does have a 360-degree field of vision, enabling it to see all around, even over the top of its head. No matter what direction an enemy approaches from, the woodcock can see it coming.

SMELL: Think Wolverine's got a sensitive schnozzola? He's got nothing on the Australian emperor moth. The male emperor moth has the most acute smell in nature—it can detect a female moth's pheromones (think of it as sexy perfume) at a range of seven miles. Its smell is so keen it can detect a single molecule of scent. Yowza!

HEARING: Can anything top the ninja-like senses, the pinpoint hearing of someone like Elektra? You betcha! Y'see, sound waves are measured in hertz (Hz), or one vibration per second, with the musical note of middle C falling at 261 Hz. While humans only hear in the 20 to 20,000 Hz range, the common dolphin can hear all the way up to 280,000 Hz.

SONAR: Man-Bat flies around by natural sonar, as does his namesake. Emitting a series of high-pitched sounds, the common bat bounces these sounds

The fictional Flash (left) has got nothing on the real-life African cheetah, which can hit 45 mph in two seconds.

off targets and navigates by echoes. While engaged in aerial pursuit, an excited bat can emit up to 200 separate sounds per second.

SUPER-STRENGTH

We all know Superman tosses around mountaintops, Iron Man pulverizes enemy helicopters and Lobo bench-presses asteroids—while the rest of us struggle with bags of groceries. But such feats of relative power *are* found in reality. Like what? Read on...

STRENGTH: You think Pitt is a monster? The tropical rhinoceros beetle can support 850 times its own weight. The average human with the proportionate strength of this type of beetle could lift 170,000 pounds (more than 80 tons). With pecs like that you could heft around tanks and fighter jets.

INVULNERABILITY: In reality, there's really no such thing as true invulnerability. Still, certain insects can prove pretty darn tough. A particular breed of desert ants in the Sahara can withstand temperatures up to 158 degrees Fahrenheit (F), while foraging for food. On the flip side, specially dehydrated African chironomid larvae can survive exposure to liquid helium (-518 degrees Fahrenheit) for up to five minutes with no ill effects.

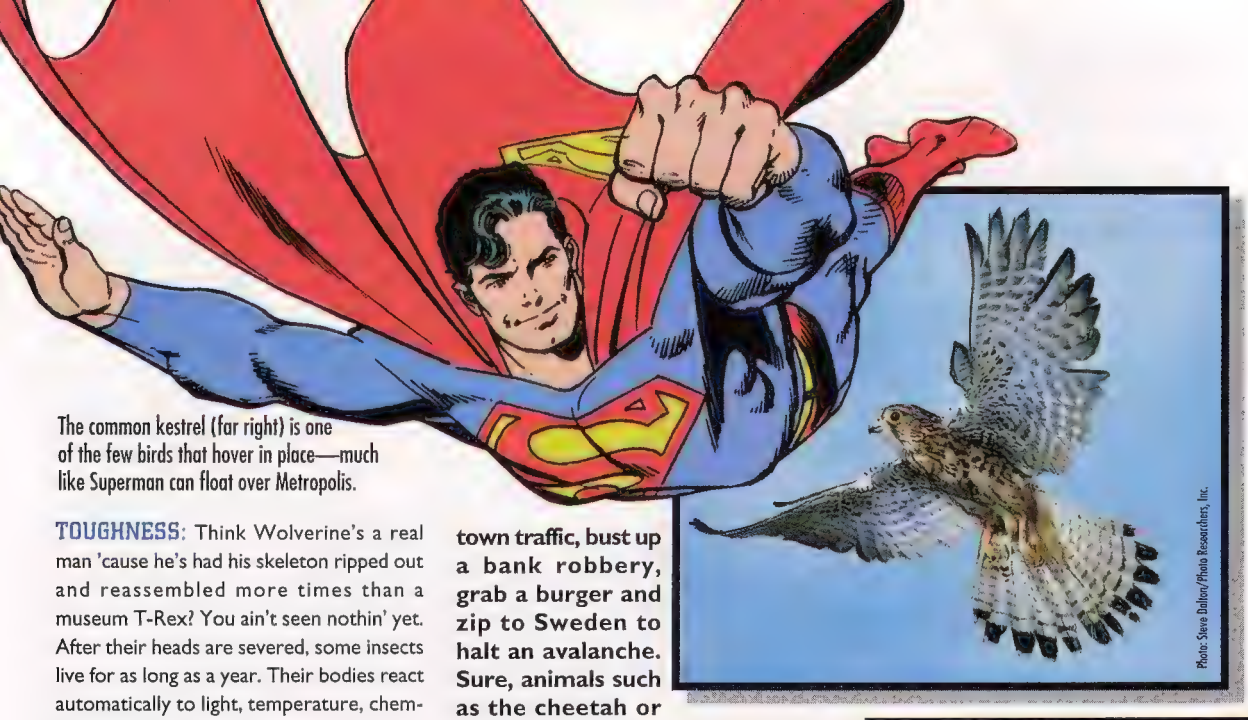
SUPER-LEAP: You figure if you're super-strong, you've got the leg muscles to leap tall buildings in a single bound or, like the Hulk, bound from town to town. An average flea's jumping ability is fairly impressive—it can catapult itself 130 times its own height. With the same power, you could jump about 800 feet high, or more than twice the height of the Statue of Liberty.

HEIGHTENED ENDURANCE

Who'd *really* win in a slugfest between Superman and the Hulk? Either way, it comes down to who could last the longest—otherwise known as endurance. And if you think fellas like Juggernaut and Doomsday are hard to keep down, look at these real-life feats of endurance...

STAMINA: All right, this one takes the cake. Colossus, Maul and Martian Manhunter are mere lightweights compared to this little guy: the emperor penguin. Picture this scenario: It's mating season. After swimming around in the coastal seas, the emperor penguin makes the long trek to its breeding ground across Antarctica, some 50 to 80 miles inland. Once there, the male penguin incubates the female's egg between his abdomen and feet during the depths of the Antarctic winter. Temperatures drop as low as -140 degrees Fahrenheit with gale winds whipping to speeds of 95 mph. Only when the female returns does the male leave, covering the same distance back. The whole journey takes four months, during which time the male *does not eat.* And you thought waiting at the White Castle drive-thru was rough.

Think Pitt (left) is pretty strong? Try the rhinoceros beetle, which can lift 850 times its own weight!



The common kestrel (far right) is one of the few birds that hover in place—much like Superman can float over Metropolis.

TOUGHNESS: Think Wolverine's a real man 'cause he's had his skeleton ripped out and reassembled more times than a museum T-Rex? You ain't seen nothin' yet. After their heads are severed, some insects live for as long as a year. Their bodies react automatically to light, temperature, chemicals and other stimuli.

DURABILITY: Swamp Thing always seemed to be gettin' a bad rap. "He's a *plant.* How hard could he be to kill?" Well, what if we told you some Arctic lupine seeds found in frozen silt dating back to 13,000 B.C. were planted and germinated as if they had forgotten it was no longer the last Ice Age? Still think Swamp Thing's easy to get rid of?

FLIGHT

If you gotta travel somewhere far away, you just fly, right? Same deal with superheroes—only they don't need an airplane. Whether it be Iron Man's armor, the Rocketeer's jet pack or even Hawkman's wings, superheroes have the ability to travel nice and easy. Much like these real-world flying "machines"...

SPEED: Always felt the Falcon was lame? Guess again. The Falcon's namesake is the world's fastest bird. While diving for prey, the peregrine falcon can reach speeds over 200 mph, as fast as the world's fastest race car.

GRACE: Ever wish you could be really cool like Superman and float above the city skyline? Maybe *you* can't, but there are a few birds that can hover in place, including the common kestrel, which whips its wings back and forth in a circular-like motion to keep itself aloft.

SUPER-SPEED

Ever take a brisk run around the continent before lunch? If you've got super-speed powers like The Flash, "slow" is when you save a dozen kids in a burning building, avoid mid-town traffic, bust up a bank robbery, grab a burger and zip to Sweden to halt an avalanche. Sure, animals such as the cheetah or the hummingbird aren't quite up to near-infinite speeds, but they're impressive in their own little ways...

SPEED: The world's fastest mammal, the African cheetah, can accelerate from a standing start to a speed of 45 mph in about two seconds, ultimately reaching speeds of more than 60 mph. The world's fastest fish, the Pacific sailfish, can swim at a velocity equivalent to 68 mph. Pretty good for a guy not runnin' on gasoline.

METABOLISM: The American ruby-throated hummingbird beats its wings at the incredible speed of 50 to 70 times per second. If a 170-pound man expended energy at the same rate as the hummingbird, he'd have to eat 285 pounds of hamburger each day in order to maintain his weight. The same man would have to sweat 100 pounds of perspiration per hour to keep his skin temperature below the boiling point.

AGILITY: Talk about quick reflexes. The fastest muscle movement ever recorded is the wing beat of the midge insect, which beats its tiny wings 62,760 times per minute. (That's over 1,000 flaps per second!)

BURROWING: Ever wonder what an asset Quicksilver would be to a construction crew? Well, the gopher, one of the fastest diggers on the planet, is no slouch either. If a man had the same burrowing rate as a gopher, in 10 hours he could dig an 18-inch-diameter hole seven miles long.

WATER-WALKING: Sure, you've seen Flash run across water and chalked it up as impossible. Us too. Then along comes a marine lizard (nicknamed "The Jesus Lizard") in nature who runs across ponds by creating air pockets with its tiny webbed feet to hold it aloft. So it's really walking on air. Go figure.

TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT

You're probably wondering what the limits of the human body are. How much can a person lift before keeling over dead? Can a person survive for two weeks without bread or water? What exactly are we capable of?

STRENGTH: The record for power lifting is 310 kilograms (682 pounds) for the bench press and 406 kilograms (893 pounds) for the dead lift. The body's strongest muscle, the jaw, has been documented to hold up to 975 pounds for approximately two seconds.

EYESIGHT: People have been able to detect flashes of light in total darkness, when as few as five photons of light were available.

SMELL: There are odor technicians in the perfume business with the olfactory skill to distinguish 380,000 different odor variations.

ENDURANCE: 70,715 sit-ups in 24 hours. Push-ups? Try 46,001. The longest anyone has survived without food and water is 18 days.

SPEED: The world's fastest athletes can reach speeds of nearly 30 mph. The same athletes can travel the length of a football field in less than 10 seconds. ■ *MS*

THE REAL DEAL

What about superbeings who are actually based on real plants, insects and animals? How close are they to their real-life counterparts? Let's see how they compare...

Photo: Tom & Pat Leeson/Photo Researchers, Inc.

WOLVERINE—Perhaps the strongest creature for its size and the best equipped mammal in the whole Arctic region, this ferocious weasel has been known to kill animals several times its size, even moose or elk. That certainly seems to fit in with the X-Man we know, as do the wolverine's sharp claws for traversing icy snow, and its high degree of intelligence and cunning. What doesn't jive with our favorite Canadian berserker? Generally, wolverines are slow and clumsy (They usually catch their prey by falling on them from trees!), they don't have any form of "healing factor" or regeneration, and they certainly don't have the same capabilities of sniffing out enemies like our friend Logan does.

SPIDER-MAN—There's an average of 50,000 spiders per acre in green areas; each spider annually destroys a hundred times its number in insects. So you can see where Spider-Man gets his reputation for catching the bad guys. Just like our favorite wall-crawler, you probably know that spiders are amazingly strong for their size, have incredible agility and spin webs. But did you know some of them—long-legged sun spiders in particular—can reach speeds of over 10 mph? As for Spider-Man's "spider-sense," which warns him of danger, spiders generally have lots of eyes, allowing them to see their surroundings with unusual clarity and alerting them to danger far in advance. Seems Spidey's actually a pretty good match with his "kin."

HAWKMAN—With his flight, agility and enhanced senses, Hawkman fits the bill of most birds, especially hawks, first-class hunters that they are. Able to see three or four times better than humans, hear prey rustling in the leaves below as they cruise the forest trees and detect danger from the faintest scent in the air, the hawk is one of the dominant avian predators. The only difference between Hawkman and his brethren? He carries a mace.

SWAMP THING—Plants are amazing creatures, so anything Swamp Thing wanted to create, he probably could. Pumpkins have been known to grow to a whopping 1,000 pounds, cornstalks have reached higher than 30 feet tall and a cherry tomato plant once measured 28 feet long. Though probably not as fast as the instant bodies Swampy pops up all over the place, the fastest growing plants (certain species of bamboo) have been known to grow three feet per day. And a single winter rye plant has sent out 387 miles of roots, so it wouldn't be surprising if Swampy could find his way anywhere.

COBRA—Just as Marvel's Cobra is lethal, the king cobra is the largest poisonous snake in the world. A human can die within 15 minutes of its bite. In fact, some snakes (like the Timor Sea snake) carry enough venom to kill 20 million mice. And like the villain, the king cobra is able to flatten its body for increased flexibility and spread its neck ribs to adapt that familiar hooded posture. Interestingly enough, the king cobra, even with its unnerving, penetrating hiss, is less aggressive than many other snakes. ■ *MS*

ENERGY CONTROL

If a single gram of matter could be converted to pure energy, there'd be enough energy to keep a light bulb lit for 2,850 years, or from the time of the Greek Empire to today. A tiny bit of matter conversion goes a long way, and most of our favorite heroes manipulate energy in one form or another—Storm toasting Magneto with her lightning bolts, Human Torch singeing Dr. Doom with his fire blasts or Red Tornado hurling Despero with gale-force winds. The world of nature is equally filled with some amazing boasts of raw power...

AIR: No doubt you were impressed the last time Whirlwind leveled a building while fighting the Avengers. But you ain't seen nothing yet: There's enough energy in 10 minutes of one hurricane to match the nuclear stockpiles of the entire world. In fact, if harnessed, the energy produced by one hurricane could supply the electrical energy used in the entire U.S. for half a year.

WATER: You thought Hydro-Man was only good for slugging it out with Spider-Man? Guess again. The energy provided by a four-foot wave moving along a 100-mile front would supply power to a city the size of Seattle for nearly a complete day. An inch of rainfall dropping 1,000 feet and draining off for one square mile has the same energy, if harnessed, as 60,000 tons of TNT.

EARTH: Avalanche just may be the most fearsome member of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. A typical avalanche moves one million cubic yards of snow and earth, or an amount that'd fill 10,000 dump trucks over a stretch of 200 miles. It gets even worse. Avalanches rumble down mountainsides at speeds approaching 300 mph, the force of the violent upheaval producing hurricane-force winds in front of it.

FIRE: Speaking of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, Pyro may seem like a pushover, but don't bet on it. With the ability to strike swiftly anywhere, fire is a powerful and frequent force. There are 2.4 million fires per year in the U.S. and over 6,000 fire-associated deaths—enough deaths to wipe out an entire town. What's its damage capacity? The southern California wildfires of 1993 destroyed, on average, 100 buildings per day. In Florida alone, 115,000 acres are ravaged annually by forest fires.

ELECTRICITY: Don't be surprised if Electro's next singed victim yelps a bit. A single lightning bolt is five times hotter than the surface of the sun and heats the surrounding air to 2,700 degrees Fahrenheit. Don't think a living being can generate electricity? Electric eels do it all the time, discharging up to 650 volts (compared to a car battery's 12 volts), which will kill small animals and stun humans. Over 500 varieties of fish can generate electricity.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Yes, there are still impossibilities in comics. A Howitzer shell can penetrate a steel vault door at 12 paces, yet it can't scratch Superman. The fastest jet known to man can lap the world in 11 hours, while the Flash can do it in a tenth of a second. These are abilities that simply defy the laws of physics. But if you think there's no way superpowers could exist in our world, put that comic book down for a bit and take a look outside your window. Comics are neat, but reality's neater. W

Mike Searle is the editor of InQuest *magazine. He wishes he had the power of a Phorid fly, which injects creatures with torpedo-shaped eggs. Then, like out of "Aliens," the pupa hatch inside the creature, eating the creature's brain until the head lops off. Pleasant, huh?*

BATMAN
VERSUS
PREDATOR
III
The galaxy's most fearsome hunters are back... and they're after Gotham City's greatest heroes.
Four-issue miniseries beginning in September.
Written by Chuck Dixon.
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THE WIZARD Q&A

Hero

BY MATTHEW SENREICH

"No pressure, right?" jokes a relaxed Mark Waid as he sits up at the table in the small 11th floor Marvel Comics conference room. Waid is referring to the shared task of relaunching Marvel's core heroes this winter after the *Heroes Reborn: The Return* mini-series. "Seriously though, somebody has to bring these heroes back to their proper universe and make sense of it all. Might as well be us."

Waid points to his fellow writers Kurt Busiek and Scott Lobdell who also sit at the table. The three of them intend to pick up the ball after the conclusion of the controversial year-long "Heroes Reborn" deal that gave former Marvel artists Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld creative control of *Avengers*, *Captain America*, *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man* to help boost sales. Now Busiek, Lobdell and Waid will usher the core Marvel heroes back into the mainstream Marvel Universe from the "Heroes Reborn" Universe. Waid will tackle *Captain America* in November, Lobdell will take on *Fantastic Four* in the same month and Busiek will test the mettle of *Avengers* and *Iron Man* in December.

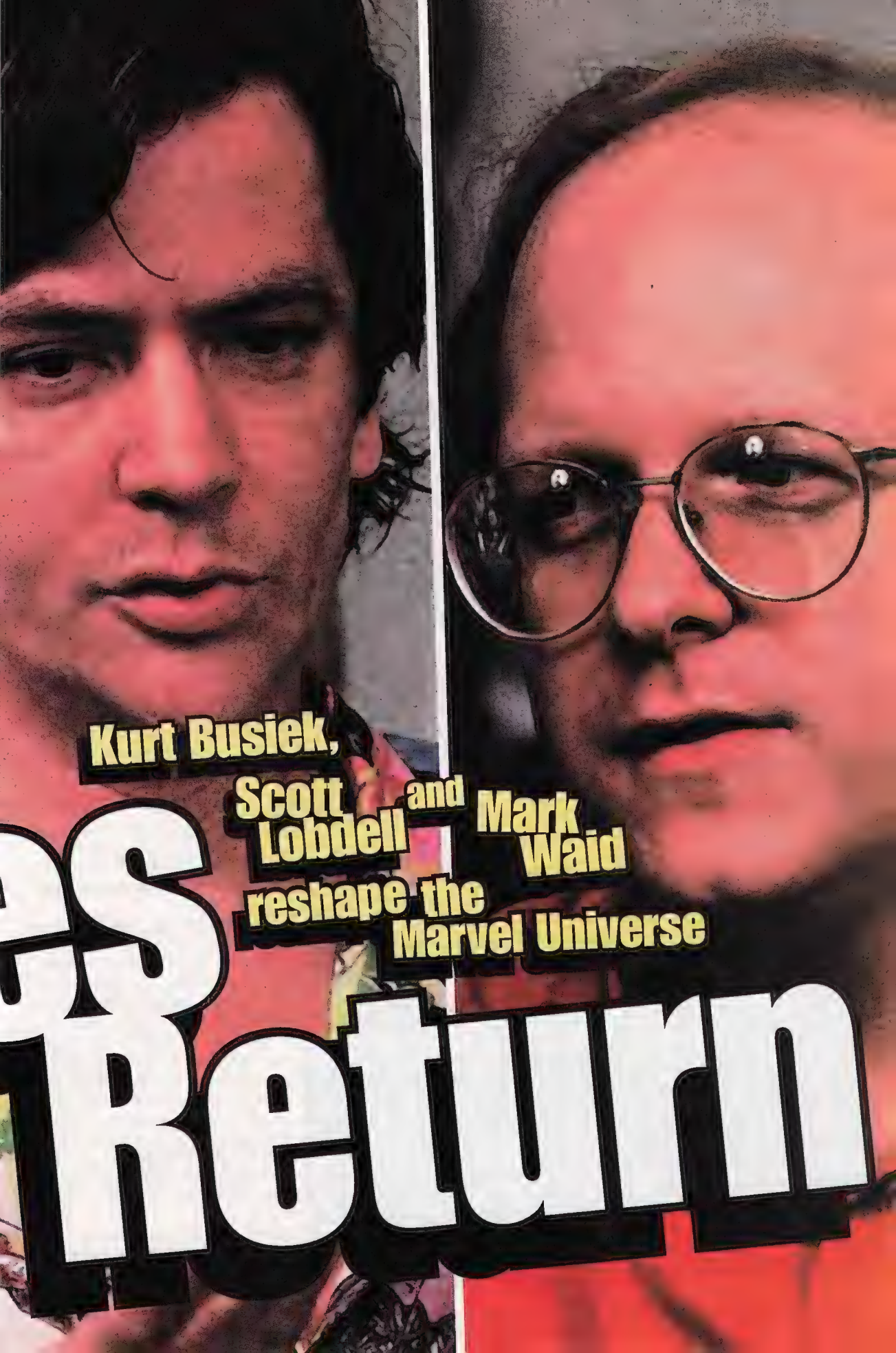
Sitting across the table from Waid is Lobdell. This is perhaps the first time Waid and Lobdell have been in a room together since their creative clashes while collaborating on the two X-Men books. When their partnership ended, it did not end on good terms. In fact, the two barely exchanged words when they entered the room. Acting almost as buffers, a host of Marvel editors including Tom Brevoort, Bobbie Chase, Bob Harras and Matt Idelson quietly crowd along the perimeter of the room. Though the room is silent, the tension is noticeable.

Completely at ease and sitting between Waid and Lobdell is Busiek, who pleasantly maintains small talk and simply looks excited to be here, talking about the two comic book titles he's wanted to write since he was 14.

Wizard orchestrated a roundtable discussion with the three creators upon the conclusion of a "Heroes Return" summit in the Marvel offices in June. Fresh from their brainstorming, we scooped them up to talk about the future of the Marvel Universe's core characters, how they will interact and if Waid and Lobdell can put aside their differences to work together.

(From left) Busiek, Lobdell and Waid relaunch Marvel's big guns this winter.

Photos by Paul Schiraldi


Kurt Busiek,
Scott Lobdell
and
Mark Waid
reshape the Marvel Universe
es
Return

***WIZARD:* How exactly are you all bringing the heroes back in each of your books?**

LOBDELL: *Fantastic Four* is starting out sometime after the *Heroes Return* mini-series [which returns the heroes to the Marvel Universe]. It opens up about a week later with them vacationing on top of the world. We're going to take a deep breath before the FF dive into it all. Issue #2 or #3 will start to see what their reactions are to the new state of the Marvel Universe. It's changed somewhat since they left. Squatters have shown up in their house [the Thunderbolts] and they need to figure out where they are going to set up shop.

WAID: In Cap's case, we're taking advantage of something that Peter [David, writer for *Heroes Reborn: The Return*] is setting up which I can't say. It [the *The Return* mini-series] has a very satisfying ending, but it ends with a mysterious element as well. The mystery propels the reader directly into our books.

BUSIEK: [*To Waid*] You're doing the closest to a trigger response. You pick up right after the events of the "Heroes Return" mini-series and *Captain America* is the book that deals with the repercussions of both "Heroes Reborn" and "Heroes Return" first. In the case of *Avengers* and *Iron Man*, these are the two books that before "Onslaught" and "Heroes Reborn" were probably the most tangled in continuity problems. The last thing we want to do is dive right into the deep end of the pool again and remind everybody that Iron Man used to be a murderer, then a teenager and so on. Like *Fantastic Four*, we're going to start off after time has passed [since the *The Return* mini-series] to start clean. We'll focus on what's interesting about these characters as opposed to what was going on the last time they were in the Marvel Universe. We'll get to the explanations and the repercussions in time—probably in the annuals for *Avengers* and *Iron Man*. Our first emphasis is making sure that you can step into each book and know exactly what's going on right from the start.

LOBDELL: The readers have been on this giant roller coaster for the last 12 months with "Heroes Reborn" and the "Onslaught" story before that, so this is an attempt to try to slow down and focus on who these characters are.

How interconnected are all four of these books going to be?

WAID: *Captain America*, *Iron Man* and *Avengers* are by nature very thoroughly integrated. Iron Man and Cap are Avengers and will continue to be Avengers in all likelihood, although Kurt has not officially announced a lineup for the team.

What is the Avengers' line-up going to be?

BUSIEK: I won't tell. At the beginning a threat arises, a day unlike any other, when Earth's Mightiest Heroes are called together. The call goes out and a lot of people who have been associated with the Avengers in the past respond. For the first issue, we have a George Pérez [penciler for *The Avengers*] fun-o-rama where we push the limit on how many characters he feels like drawing. Once that's over, we'll settle down with an actual line-up. A cool thing about the Avengers is always "Who is going to be on the roster?"

Is Cap going to be in the Avengers?

WAID: At least at first. He's sure to be in that first issue.

LOBDELL: However, I want it said for all the *Wizard* readers, if the Avengers don't allow

ART OF THE DEAL: Fantastic Four

***Fantastic Four* penciler Alan Davis intends to go retro with his redesigned look for the quartet.**

"I'm going for more of a traditional look to the FF because the book's gone back to being more like the classic family setup of the original series," Davis says (whose FF can be seen above).

But Davis notes that a new visual twist will be added to the Human Torch, with the advances in computer coloring. "You can see his costume through the flames," he notes. "And he won't look bald. It's basically to make him look more flame-like. I think it makes him look more exciting and you get the feel of it being a human figure inside the flames rather than a guy with stripes on his body."

But however minor the changes are, Davis wouldn't want it any other way. "The FF are such icons that all I want to do is bring out the core character that everyone already knows and has accepted, regardless of the specific artist's style." ■ *Craig Shutt & Matt Saunders*

"The Avengers are Marvel's senior varsity and the FF are Marvel's royal family," says Busiek to Wizard staffer Matthew Senreich.

Cap in, Captain America has a place in the Fantastic Four. Even if it means one of the four leaving. How hard would it be to put a "4" on his forehead?

WAID: So noted. [*Laughs.*]

That brings up a good point. As far as working together, I know that you guys [Mark and Scott] have had creative differences in the past. How do you plan on working together again?

WAID: That was when we were working on the same book [*X-Men*], but we're not working that closely this time.

LOBDELL: Yeah, and unless Cap joins the FF, I don't think we have to worry about some sort of rumble. And even if Cap does join, we're older now. [*All laugh.*]

Now Mark and Kurt, you mentioned the closeness between Iron Man, Captain America and the Avengers. How closely are you guys working together?

WAID: Somewhat. We're examining the friendship of Tony Stark and Steve Rogers within the context of the Avengers. I can see these two guys getting along very well. I can also see these two guys being at odds because Cap has very strong political points of view and a very strong concept of what he thinks America is, while Tony is an industrialist. Tony doesn't always see eye-to-eye with Cap.

BUSIEK: They are both heroic, but they both come from a unique viewpoint. Sometimes when striving to do good, there'll be a clash. Captain America is the heart of the Avengers and Tony Stark is the brain of the Avengers. Tony keeps the Avengers going and is the money man behind it all. Captain America has the traditional position, the duty of being out in front—both essential functions, but different. At times in the past, they have been great friends. In times in the past, they have been spitting blood at each other.

WAID: Scott, how do you see Fantastic Four integrating into working with what we're doing here?

LOBDELL: The Fantastic Four feeds the Marvel Universe by finding new corners of the Marvel Universe that no one knew were there before. They were the ones that discovered the Negative Zone. They brought in Dr. Doom who is probably the ultimate Marvel villain. They dealt with Galactus who is the ultimate cosmic threat. This is the group that painted the landscape for the Marvel Universe. Just look at all the discoveries that the FF has made over the years from Wakanda to the Negative Zone. My approach is that the Fantastic Four has barely scratched the surface of what is out there. The same way we came across the Inhumans or Subterranea, the FF is the group that finds other corners of Marvel Universe rather than dealing with those that have been mined and mined again and again. The FF will serve to bring in new and exciting characters to the Marvel Universe.

BUSIEK: The Fantastic Four are the explorers. The Avengers are the defenders. Even though these characters are the spine of the Marvel Universe, these guys have not been the headliners. We want to make them the headliners again. There will be ties between the other books. We'll never have a situation where you read *Captain America* and the story continues in *Iron Man*, then *Avengers*, then *FF*.

ART OF THE DEAL: Captain America

Having done an 11-issue run on *Captain America* immediately preceding "Heroes Rebom," penciler Ron Garney's style will look pretty familiar. "My approach really won't be a whole lot different except for my natural evolution as an artist," says Garney (whose Cap is shown above). "I'm quickly getting my feel for the character back. It's remarkable how little of it I lost. It's kind of like I never left."

Besides reintroducing a few villains and creating some new ones, Garney reveals they'll be shuffling the deck for others. "Some of the villains are going to go through some radical visual changes that will probably shock some people." Most prominently, look for a completely revamped Batroc the Leaper without his silly mustache and costume. "We're going to do as many things as we can to keep it interesting." ■*Craig Shutt*

How will the heroes deal with returning to the Marvel Universe? Will the Avengers talk with the FF about what just happened and try to make sense of it all?

LOBDELL: The Fantastic Four has been from one end of the universe to the other, inside one universe and outside another. In the big scheme of things, "Heroes Reborn" was just another adventure. It was an adventure that lasted probably longer than any other adventure, but these are the guys that met Galactus, fought back, saved the world and the star system probably more times than they can remember. They don't look at it like a life-altering event.

BUSIEK: On the other hand, a number of the Avengers must deal with the ramifications of being away so long. Who has been paying Hawkeye's rent? The ones that have no secret identities show up back alive again and they can just step back into their old lives. The rest of them will have legal tangles and the Stark Foundation is going to be helping deal with that. There's a case where a story might spill into the other books. But we won't be dealing with this until after we've gotten the books off and running. We want to hit the ground running, then we will come back later and say, "By the way, here is how it all connects to the stuff from before."

How do the Fantastic Four see the Avengers and vice versa?

BUSIEK: As respected colleagues. They are not just two competing super-groups. Like we said before, the Fantastic Four are explorers and the Avengers are the cops. The Avengers don't get together and say, "Let's go explore the Negative Zone." The Avengers get together during a crisis or when something is threatened. The FF doesn't hang around and wait for menaces or keep check on who's still in jail. The Fantastic Four are following Reed's scientific curiosity. The Avengers are Marvel's senior varsity and the FF are Marvel's royal family.

Shifting gears a bit, what about villains? With the heroes back, who will be popping up to face them?

WAID: We don't want to give away too many, but Kang will be there.

BUSIEK: We will be using the Grim Reaper, the Squadron Supreme…

WAID: Wait, should we say…

[Waid leans over to Busiek and whispers to him about what they should or shouldn't say. Meanwhile, Lobdell tries to distract onlookers by attempting to teach sign language.]

WAID: The point I was trying to make was you'll see Kang or Batroc in one of the four books, but maybe not the book you expect to see him in. Maybe we'll see the Red Skull, but maybe not in *Cap*.

BUSIEK: One of the reasons I'm so happy to be on *Iron Man* is because I want to refurbish a lot of the characters. I want to bring back a Firebrand who is truly scary. I want to see Whiplash [the old Blacklash] go through the kind of power enhancements that Iron Man goes through, so you go, "Wow, here's Whiplash." Instead of saying, "Oh gee, it's the silly guy with the whip. How could he

IRON MAN #1

THE HEROES RETURN IN THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

KURT BUSIEK

SEAN CHEN

THIS DECEMBER

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possibly stop Iron Man?"

LOBDELL: In *FF*, we'll touch base with people like the Red Ghost, and a few other classics. Mostly, we'll see all-new villains. There'll be a character called Crucible. Back in the very first year of *FF*, we saw Doctor Doom having [the] ambition to take over the world, and he started training himself from this group to Tibetan monks somewhere. Perhaps the monks themselves prior to Doom had their own agenda. This new character Crucible is one of those monks. Rather than going to the closet and finding a villain, I am going to try to get the FF to go into other rooms.

BUSIEK: Me, I'm going to the closet.

Who would win in a fight, FF or the Avengers?

BUSIEK: The FF are very good at what they do and they're very good fighters, but the Avengers are warriors. The FF are explorers who have superpowers and who are really good in a pinch, but the Avengers would destroy 'em.

WAID: The Thing is really good, but Thor's been winning battles longer than civilization has existed. I would give the nod to the Avengers on sheer strength. If it comes to discovering another dimension, I would bet on the FF. Everybody is best at their particular specialty. Captain America, Thor and the rest of the Avengers are best at winning fights.

LOBDELL: I would have to disagree. The Fantastic Four is the first family of comics. I mean, is Batman the strongest guy in the DC Universe? No. But could he find a way to beat everybody? Probably.

BUSIEK: But Captain America would still kick Batman's ass.

LOBDELL: The Fantastic Four are virtually unbeatable. I mean, they went up against Galactus.

WAID: But the Watcher helped them win. If Uatu gives them an Ultimate Nullifier, yeah, the Avengers can't touch them.

LOBDELL: I can't imagine a scenario where the Avengers could win. In fact, I would even handicap the FF and say you can call every Avenger ever and the FF would still kick the Avengers' butt. Reed would find a way.

WAID: A way to beat everyone but Captain America. Cap is the ultimate champion.

If you toss every Marvel hero against each other in a fight, who would be the last man standing?

BUSIEK: [*To Waid*] Come on you're writing the book, you say it?

WAID: Captain America. He exists to be a winner.

BUSIEK: He is the world's greatest fighting machine. To some degree, the superheroes are gods. Captain America is the god of winning. Bring in the DC Universe, bring in Image, bring in the Mets—Captain America is the last man standing.

LOBDELL: Okay, maybe the FF wouldn't beat the Avengers if Cap was there. I mean, Cap even survived Rob Liefeld. [*Laughs.*]

Speaking of Liefeld, how is "Heroes Reborn" affecting each of your books? Are characters from "Heroes Reborn" returning with the heroes?

BUSIEK: One of the things that came up over and over again when we were discussing this is that "Anything can happen."

WAID: Cap comes back and he has been gone for "a great while." There are parades, statues, and TV coverage. It's like the second coming. It forces Cap to look at himself in a new light. Steve has always thought that anybody with heart could do the job of Captain America. For the first year or two, he's going to be forced to live with himself in a light that he has not looked at himself at before. That's a way of playing off what happened in "Heroes Reborn" that's not necessarily bringing back a specific character.

BUSIEK: Meanwhile, Iron Man is going to remember it all. We'll deal with the question of defining who is Iron Man. In the last couple of years, he's been at least three different people. "Heroes Reborn" is going to play into that. We won't be actually getting into specifics until the annual, but Tony

ART OF THE DEAL: Avengers

For the first time since 1980, George Pérez is drawing *The Avengers*—and, like writer Kurt Busiek, he won't reveal the team's final line-up. The artist does reveal however, that he'll be redesigning some characters. Some will return to their classic costumes, including Hawkeye, Scarlet Witch and Vision, while the Wasp will revert back to human form from her former insectoid version. Thor will return to a classic costume with a slight modification to his tunic, while Black Widow changes back to her black jumpsuit and longer hair. "These will be slight variations on classic costumes," Pérez says. "I don't think anyone's ever improved on the originals." (See above for some of Pérez's previous *Avengers* work.)

And Pérez is chomping at the bit to get going. "I've been gone from the book so long it's like coming to it for the first time," he says. "The way the market's changed, I've got to introduce myself to a new generation of readers. I'm excited about proving myself to the new fans." ■*Craig Shutt*

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has had a lot of different faces in the past couple years. Which one is the real face? What defines Tony Stark? What makes him who he is?

LOBDELL: One of the relationships impacted by "Heroes Reborn" is the one between Franklin [Richards] and Reed. The idea is that Reed has been separated from his kid and doesn't want that to ever happen again. He wants to really concentrate on that relationship. "Heroes Reborn" made Reed lose time with his son and now he wants to make up for that time. Writers always want to get Franklin off camera. I like the idea of exploring how a kid always asks, "Why?" Reed is probably the only father that can out "why?" his son.

WAID: Not everybody is necessarily going to have the same response to "Heroes Reborn." What Tony Stark comes out of it remembering, what Captain America comes out of it with and what the FF comes out of it with will all be different. It'll be like all of us remembering different things from a similar dream we all had last night.

How is the rest of the Marvel Universe going to be affected by the "Heroes Return"?

BUSIEK: Spider-Man used to be an Avenger. Maybe he'll show up there.

WAID: I can't imagine doing a year of *Captain America* without Nick Fury, unless, of course, he stays dead.

BUSIEK: The Hulk used to be an Avenger. Actually the Hulk is going to be fairly important to a lot of us, right?

[*The editors in the back of the room nod.*]

BUSIEK: My masters say, "Yes." Can I say anymore?

[*The editors in the back of the room shake their heads.*]

BUSIEK: That's all you get from me.

What will each of your books have that they haven't before?

[illegible]: I think that hopefully what they can look forward to is what *Fantastic Four* was always about: a family of adventurers getting into one huge adventure after the next, never really understanding that they're in over their head and, because of that, they're not really in over their head.

BUSIEK: For *Avengers*, I want to deliver big splashy cosmic adventures as the backdrop to Earth's Mightiest "Melrose Place." These are cool characters whether they go out to fight the Scarlet Centurion or whether they hang around the mansion and sparks fly between them. *Iron Man* is sophistication, suspense, technology and romance. It's a book full of texture and style along with slam-bang adventures.

WAID: *Captain America* is high adventure. He is a guy who Indiana Jones would look at and go, "Wow, that's real impressive. He's really cool." We'll take him all over the globe, through time and space and wherever we feel like taking him. Wherever he is, he is the champion. Wherever he is, he rallies the people. He is the heart and soul of those around him. He is the living embodiment of freedom and courage. What new stuff will we see? We're looking at taking something away from him that is even more devastating than taking away his citizenship. We can't say what that is yet.

Between the three of you, you cover a great majority of Marvel's core titles. What's it like to be ushering in a new Marvel era, so to speak?

WAID: Thanks for adding to the pressure. [*Laughs.*] But it's absolutely thrilling.

LOBDELL: It's not like if Marvel doesn't like what we are doing, they'd take their characters and go to another company to do the job.

WAID: Oh, that never happens. They'd never do that. [*Laughs.*]

BUSIEK: I'm really charged up about these books. I've wanted to write them for over 20 years. My feeling isn't, "Oh, the pressure." My feeling is, "Stand back, I am ready to go." **W**

Wizard Staff Writer Matthew Senreich is standing back. He wouldn't wanna stop these guys for the world.

ART OF THE DEAL: Iron Man

New creative team on *Iron Man*? Smells like new duds for ol' shellhead! This time, the armor's design will be modified, using a design by Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross (shown above), with some tweaking by new penciler Sean Chen. "Kurt's so passionate about the book that I pretty much let him take the lead and then worked with him so I got a design I was comfortable drawing," says Chen. "We wanted a very sleek, integrated design to allow for fluid motion with lots of curves and no clunkiness. It's a really nice look."

Chen sees *Iron Man* as his chance to be in the spotlight. "This is the book I want to make my name with," he says. "All the stuff I've been doing has been leading up to something, but I didn't know what. I think this is it.

"It covers everything: superheroes, adventure, romance, different locales and all kinds of characters. It's going to have everything I could ever want to draw." ■ *Craig Shutt*

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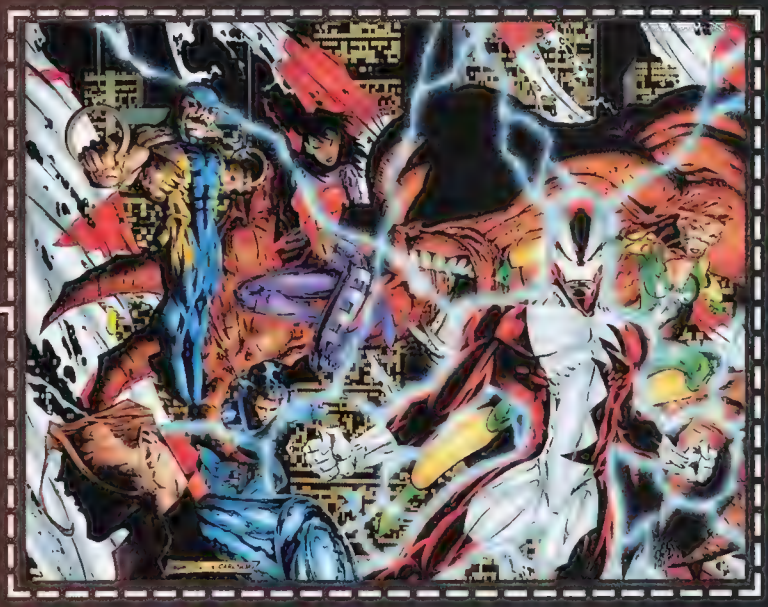

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will have his winning ID card design drawn into a future issue of *Alpha Flight*! Plus, he'll win an original page of Scott Clark artwork and a signed copy of *Alpha Flight* #1 autographed by writer Steven Seagle and artist Scott Clark! Nice!

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Basic Training

this month's host: Jim Balent

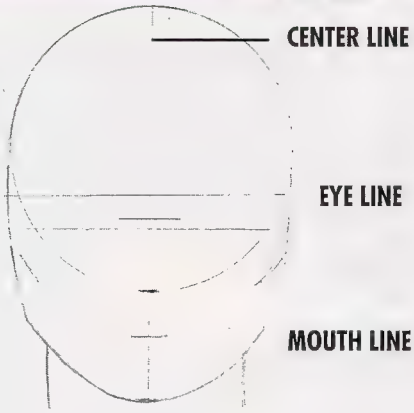
How to Draw Basic Heads

Hey, guys, it's me again. Last month, I showed you how to draw basic body types. If you've been practicing, you should be ready for the next step: basic head structures. Be sure to note that the best reference you can use is a mirror. Just spend some time staring at yourself and noticing the placement of your eyes, nose, mouth, and whatever, as well as all the contours of your face. Now, to help give you a few tips on how to draw male and female heads, I've once again enlisted the aid of Catwoman and Batman, who were more than happy to help out. So get yer pencils ready and let's face the music.

Face Front—Women

Today I'm gonna show you how to draw heads from three different angles: straight-on, three-quarters view and profile. To make things easy, we'll start with the basic straight-on, eyes-forward position. In just four easy steps (Ain't that what they all say?), you'll be able to draw our sexy pal Selina Kyle.

In **Step 1** (right), we start off with a simple circle, which we add a chin to. (You can use a compass or template for the circle, but I recommend doing it freehand to give it a more natural look.) The chin itself can be almost nonexistent to fairly outrageous, depending on who you're drawing. Since we are drawing a woman here, I suggest going with a more "rounded," less-sculpted look.

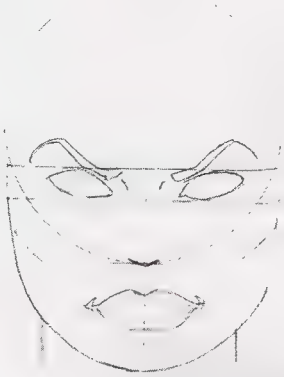


STEP 1

Split the form down the middle vertically (this is your center line), then split it in half horizontally (this is your eye line). After estimating the size of the eyes, draw two parallel lines over and under the eye line, which will create the plane for the eyes.

Your nose will fall on the bottom of your circle. Divide the nose line and chin line in half and you've found your mouth line. As for the two cheekbone lines, those are merely bony landmarks to help give you some reference.

In **Step 2**, we start to add the eyes, mouth and nose. The head should be about five eyes wide, and if you were to draw a vertical line from a corner of the mouth, it'd intersect the eye right through its center. This little trick will help you keep your mouth centered beneath the nose. (More about how to draw the eyes later.) Cheekbone lines (if you want to show 'em) should rest on the nose line and arch upward in a parallel fashion to the inner circle.



STEP 2

STEP 3

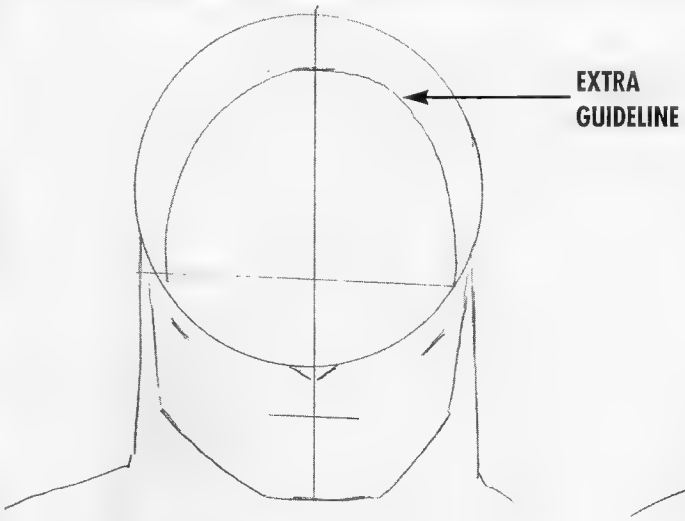
STEP 4

In **Step 3**, I added more detail and erased my guidelines.

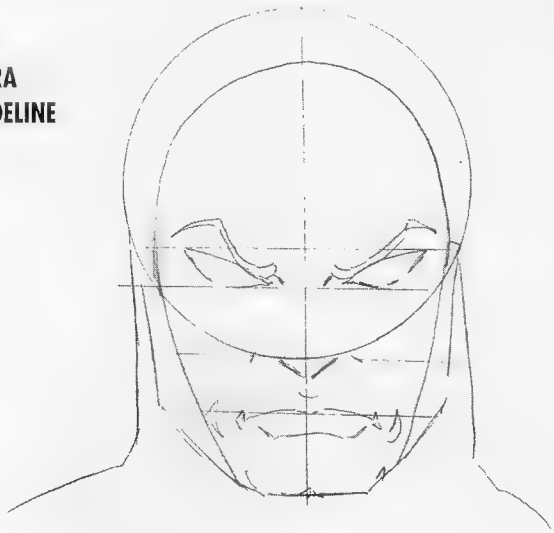
Finally, in **Step 4** (above right), I shade my face, keeping in mind all the guidelines I used to construct the head. (Of course, you won't necessarily need to shade a normal, maskless face.) This helps me create a three-dimensional drawing. For example, you'll notice I erased the cheekbone lines in Step 3. I didn't forget them—I just decided to render the mask in such a way as to *indicate* the cheekbones, instead of using a single line. This gives Catwoman's face a softer look. Remember: A mask lays on top of the face and will follow the face's contours.

Face Front—Men

Now let's jump over to Batman.



STEP 1



STEP 2

Step 1: We start out the same as we did with Catwoman, but this time add an extra guideline inside the circle. This helps me see the face plane much clearer. Notice how the chin is more squared-off and chiseled than Catwoman's.

Step 2: Dividing the face plane in half vertically and horizontally will once again give you your eye line. This time, the nose is just below the bottom of the circle, as opposed to right on the line. Making the nose longer or more pronounced works better on a male face, just as a shorter, smaller nose works better on a female's. And yes, the same corner-of-the-mouth-to-middle-of-the-eye rule applies to male faces too.

STEP 3

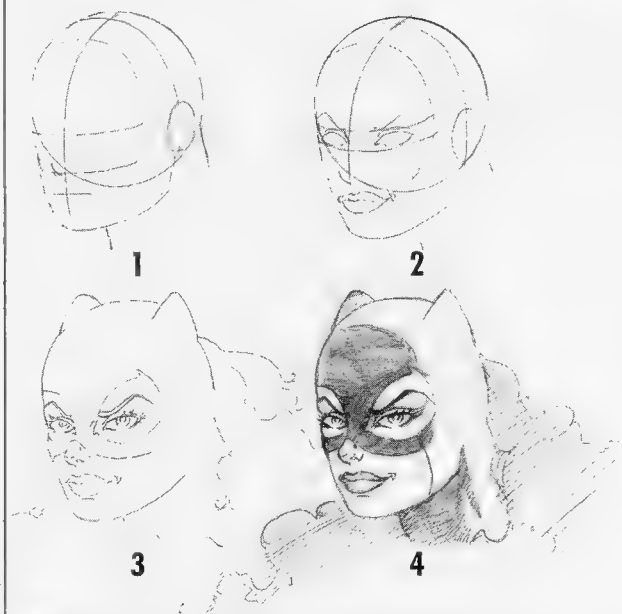
Step 3: Erase your guidelines and add a frown and wrinkles. (Unless Batman's in a good mood, of course…)

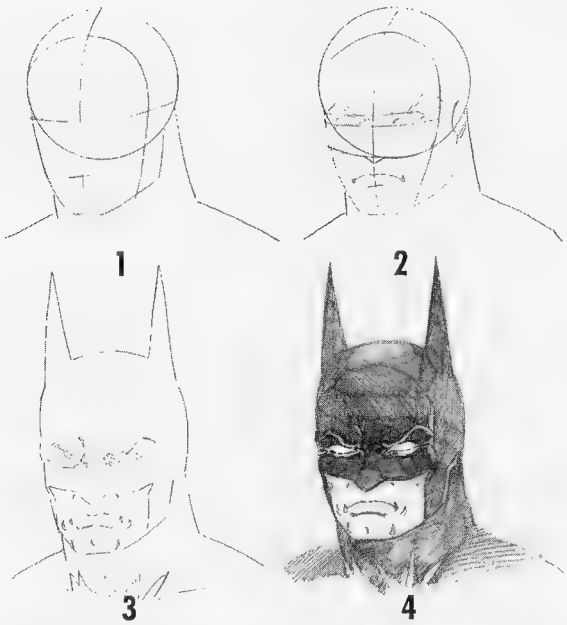
STEP 4

Step 4: Notice if you shade the face plate darker than the rest of the head, it separates better and helps give you that three-dimensional quality.

The Three-Quarter View

Once you've learned the basics of drawing the head from the front, drawing it from the side or three-quarters is a piece of cake. Again, it's a four-step process.





Step 1: Start with your circle and chin. Remember, a female's chin is shorter and more rounded, as opposed to a male's chin, which should be longer and more chiseled. Keep practicing to find the right size and placement here. Then draw in your center line to one side of the circle, depending on which way your head is facing (remember: this view should make the face more of a three-dimensional object) and divide it as usual to find your nose, eye and mouth lines. Notice how you can see the face plate better here, in its three-quarter view.

Step 2: Add a nose, eyes and mouth. Notice that each corner of the mouth still lines up underneath the center of each eye. And keep that 3-D perspective in mind when adding these objects.

Step 3: Flesh out the eyes, nose and mouth, then add a mask and hair and erase your guidelines.

Step 4: Shade your illustration.

Ready for Your Profile?

Yep, you guessed it, creating a profile shot is another easy four-step process.

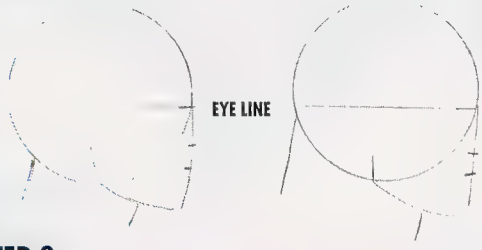
Step 1: Draw in your circle and chin. Again, the chin is up to your interpretation, depending on who you're drawing. Your eye line will still be your center horizontal line.

Step 2: The nose and mouth are found the same way, by dividing the space from eye to chin (nose line), and nose to chin (mouth line). The ear, if you need to draw it, is found between the top of the eyebrow line and the bottom of the nose line—it's roughly centered in there.

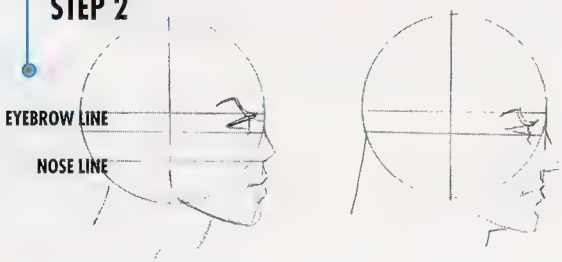
Step 3: Draw in your masks and move on to Step 4.

Step 4: Shade 'em in and you're finished. Notice how light reflections on the masks help bring out the cheekbones and wrinkles of your character.

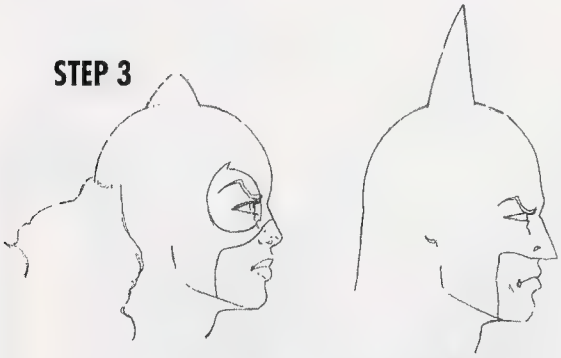
STEP 1



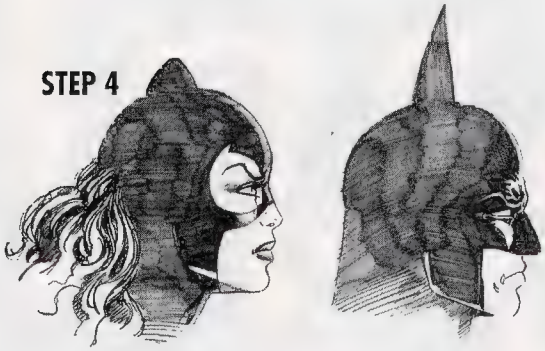
STEP 2

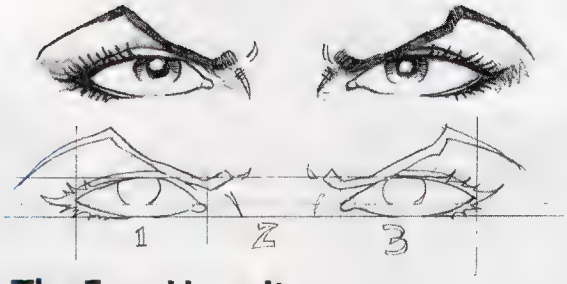


STEP 3



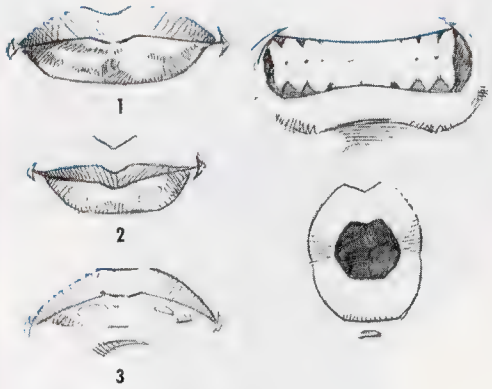
STEP 4





The Eyes Have It

A simple rule: When drawing a pair of eyes from the front (male or female), keep in mind that there should be an eye's length between the two, thus making it three eyes from end to end. Also take note of all the shading, eyelashes, eyebrows, etc. Just look at people's eyes all around you to see all the intricacies.



Mouthing Off

On the above left, I've drawn the mouth from three different angles. The first is straight on. The second is from above: Notice that you see less of the top lip and more of the bottom. The third is drawn from underneath; you'll see more of the top lip than you do of the bottom.

Now, when a character's grinding his teeth (as on the above right), an easy way to show this is by drawing the shape of a peanut. The lips tend to curl inward and the corners of the mouth widen to show as much teeth as possible.

And if your female character's surprised, it's best to think of the "O" shape when drawing the mouth, for this'll give your character a sexy quality.

Well, that's it, folks. Now you're ahead of the game. (Hah! I crack myself up.) Remember, it's best to study from many sources—buy an anatomy book, talk to other artists and always look around you. See ya! **W**

Jim Balent, whose Catwoman and Batman heads can be seen monthly in the pages of DC Comics' Catwoman, *has a good head on his shoulders, no matter what the angle.*

TASTE
THE
FEAR!

EVIL ERNIE

Chaos! Comics is totin' *Evil Ernie* #1/2 as the gosh-darned scariest piece of literature since Poe's "The Raven"! In fact, this book is SO messed up we won't even let you buy it until your legal guardian gives the OK!

Yup, Wizard Press and those grisly guys an' gals from Chaos! Comics have momentarily meshed their minds to produce this, an all-original, all-new Evil Ernie story! And get this–it's only available through this special *Wizard* offer, and yours for the taking at the low price of just three deadly dollars–a price to simply die for!

Evil Ernie #1/2 gives you these ghostly goodies:

- An all-new eerie Evil Ernie story, written by Chaos! founder Brian Pulido and Drew Bittner, with painted artwork by Brian LeBlanc of *Purgatori* and *Dracula: Gambit* fame! Ghoulish!
- Behind-the-scenes sketchbook material! See what goes into the making of this unearthly title! Ghastly!
- And the downright scariest part of all–this is an *Evil Ernie* comic you can't get anywhere else! This exclusive book is available only through this one time *Wizard* offer! Gory!

Halloween's right around the corner, kiddies! So get in on the frightful fun early!

SENSITIVE MATERIAL. MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR SOME READERS.

SCARE OFF THE LAWYERS

[illegible] ...ted. This coupon mu[illegible] ...envelope, one [illegible] ...pons in the same [illegible] ...money order only. [illegible] ...other foreign order[illegible] ...$6.00. All payment must be in U.S. funds [illegible] ...payable to Wizard Pre[illegible] ...good only while supply lasts. Please allow [illegible] ...hanges of address will no[illegible] ...ded unless Wizard Press is notified in writing by Noven[illegible] ...997.

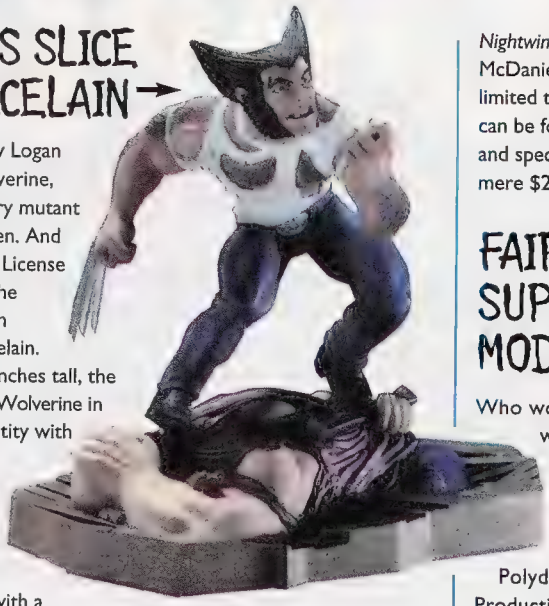
THIS OFFER EXPIRES NOVEMBER 17, 1997.

JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

LOGAN'S SLICE O' PORCELAIN

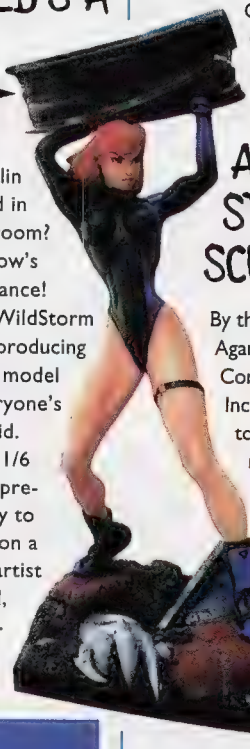


You may know Logan better as Wolverine, that short, hairy mutant from the X-Men. And now, Creative License has captured the popular hero in cold-cast porcelain. Standing nine inches tall, the statue features Wolverine in his civilian identity with claws bared, standing over a fallen opponent. Retailing for $175, the statue comes with a certificate of authenticity and hits comic and specialty stores in September.

BOOKING BATMAN

He's no Easy Reader, but Batman sure knows the importance of readin'. That's why DC Comics is releasing the Batman Bookends this September, featuring the Dynamic Duo of Batman and Robin seemingly leaping out of the bookends' vertical base. Each piece is made of cold-cast porcelain and sports a pewter silhouette (one end features the Joker, the other spotlights the Riddler). Sculpted by William Paquet (based on designs from *Nightwing* artist Scott McDaniel), the bookends are limited to 3,000 copies and can be found in comic book and specialty stores for a mere $295.

FAIRCHILD'S A SUPER MODEL



Who wouldn't want Caitlin Fairchild in his bedroom? Well, now's your chance! Polydata and WildStorm Productions are producing a limited-edition model kit featuring everyone's favorite Gen[13] kid. The model kit is 1/6 scale and comes pre-painted and ready to assemble. Based on a design by *Gen[13]* artist J. Scott Campbell, this 13-inch cold-cast model is limited to 1,300 copies and comes packaged in a window box, featuring original art by Campbell and Alex Garner. It ships to specialty shops everywhere in September for $169. Keep yer eyes peeled for future kits based on fellow Gen[13] members Grunge, Rainmaker, Burnout and Freefall.

A STRANGE SCULPTURE

By the Eye of Agamotto! Marvel Comics and Applause Inc. are joining forces to bring you a mystical addition to your sculpture garden: the Dr. Strange Collector Sculpture! Hand-painted, this statue features the Doc dramatically conjuring over an arcane text with mysterious artifacts strewn about. Sculpted in cold-cast resin and limited to 1,500 pieces, Earth's Sorcerer Supreme stands 9.5" X 7" X 6.5", comes gift boxed with a certificate of authenticity and retails for $150. It's currently available in mystical comics stores everywhere. Call 1-800-777-6990 for the store nearest you.

Batman Bookends

THE LAST STRAW

You better hope these ain't the last straws, 'cause they're just too cool to miss! Applause and Marvel Comics have teamed up to put the fun back in drinking with three "crazy" straws featuring your favorite Marvel heroes! Each plastic straw is twisted to ensure maximum wackiness when drinking, and comes with a PVC figure attached. You'll find the Incredible Hulk, Wolverine or Spider-Man climbing around your straw. They're currently available in retail stores everywhere for just $2.50 apiece. Whadda deal!

Applause Crazy Straws

A BIG PUZZLE

Keep a big eye out for a jigsaw puzzle featuring everyone's favorite characters from Frank Miller and Geof Darrow's *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot*. This 550-piece puzzle from Dark Horse Comics measures 18" X 24", comes in an illustrated box by Darrow and ships this December to comic book, game and toy stores everywhere for $14.95.

Product of the Month

WITH THIS LEGION RING

If you've ever wanted to fly like Cosmic Boy, Brainiac or Ultra Boy from DC Comics' Legion of Super-Heroes, well, you're outta luck. But now, thanks to DC, you can own a replica of the Legion flight rings for $54.95. These 14 karat gold-plated rings feature the Legion logo on the face and are limited to 5,000 copies. Available in sizes 4 to 13, the rings ship to comic shops everywhere in September. And we probably don't need to say it, but these rings WON'T let you fly. So, don't even think about it.

A VENOMOUS MODEL KIT

Now you can own your own multiple pieces of evil. Avatar Creations has whipped up a nifty Venom Cold-Cast Resin Model Kit based upon a design by comic book artist Simon Bisley. The kit, featuring Venom on a mountain of skulls and bones, comes unpainted and unassembled in 1/6 scale. Look for it in comic book and specialty stores for $79.95.

BOBA FETT'S BUSTED

Legends in 3 Dimensions brings you a limited-edition, cold-cast porcelain bust of the legendary Star Wars character, Boba Fett! Mounted on a distinctive base, the Boba bust stands 10 inches tall and is limited to

5,000 copies. The price is currently undetermined, though expect to shell out between $150 to $200. According to Legends in 3 Dimensions, half of the busts (that's 2,500) will be painted in a style from "Return of the Jedi," while the others will feature a painted Fett from one of the other "Star Wars" films. Look for it in specialty and collectible stores everywhere this September.

TIME FOR GUNSMITH CATS

Are you a fan of Kenichi Sonoda's *Gunsmith Cats?* Well, now's your chance to prove it! Dark Horse Comics brings you the Gunsmith Cats Wristwatch and Gunsmith Cats Zippo Lighter! First, show your manga colors with this Gunsmith Cats wristwatch! The water-resistant quartz watch, whose price is currently undetermined, comes with a full-color face and strap that'll make you look super stylish. Next, an American-made chrome Zippo lights your way for $29.95, featuring the Cats logo on the front. Look for 'em both in comic and specialty shops this December.

Good luck piecing together the "Big Guy" jigsaw puzzle.

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a company putting out some easy cheesin' good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like the Jubilee Back-to-School Binder, the Captain America Frisbee or the Young Heroes in Love Home Pregnancy Test? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our groovy "Junk Drawer" column. (Of course, we'd also like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and sample products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

The E3 '97 Report

By Rick Moscatello

For video game players around the world, the yearly E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo) show is the World Series, Super Bowl and Christmas all rolled into one. Every video game company shows up to the expo to show off their new games, some so new they haven't even been made yet. And besides showin' all sorts o' neat games, some exhibitors give out cool T-shirts or offer free (non-alcoholic) beverages. In short, E3 is a carnival for big kids.

The Georgia World Congress Center and Georgia Dome in Atlanta were not only huge, they were packed. The jungle foliage from DreamWorks Interactives' "Jurassic Park"-influenced display towered over everything near it. Sony PlayStation's area was multi-leveled, affording anyone with the energy to climb up a few flights of stairs a nice view of the area. And the Nintendo area was so large, a compass would have been pretty helpful. Larger-than-life-size statues of popular game heroes like Crash Bandicoot and Mario decorated exhibitors' stands.

Every company clamored for attention as loudly as possible—even the Intel theme jingle, at 50 decibels, was kinda rockin'! To get even more attention, there were plenty o' models dressed up in wacky costumes such as the Godzilla-like creature from *Rampage* shambling down one walkway, or a 9-foot-tall Scotsman (okay, he's on stilts) lumbering up another. The surrealism of the spectacle was enhanced still more by a misty fog that covered the entire area, limiting visibility to a quarter mile or so. (The place was HUUUUUUUUGE!)

For those of you who couldn't make the trip, here's a look at some of the hottest games you can look forward to seeing (and playing!) soon:

ACCLAIM

TITLE: Batman & Robin
SHIPPING: Fall
AVAILABILITY: PlayStation
THE SKINNY: Based on the movie, this is a 3-D third-person driving, fighting, shooting and sleuthing game. Players—the game is for one player only—get to decide whether to use Batman, Robin or Batgirl (each hero is strong in some areas, weak in others) to fight Mr. Freeze, Poison Ivy, Bane and their respective goons. Each character sprite is motion captured for realism; the faces of the heroes and villains all appear as they do in the film "Batman and Robin" and appropriate sound samples are used.

The game allows users to drive five different vehicles (the Batmobile, Batskiff, Bathammer, Redbird and Batcycle), shoot over 30 different projectiles and do plenty of detective work by consulting the Batcomputer in the Batcave. The game takes place over three real-time 12-hour nights, and if the hero doesn't hurry, he can actually arrive at the scene of the crime *after* the criminals have fled. Each game will be randomized, so the game's replay value is almost unlimited.

TITLE: Fantastic Four
SHIPPING: Fall
AVAILABILITY: PlayStation
THE SKINNY: Marvel's first superhero team (Mr. Fantastic, The Invisible Woman, Thing and the Human Torch) is coming to the PlayStation in an interesting 2-D side-scroller. The coolness will exponentially increase when up to four players team together (with a multi-tap, all four can play at the same time) to bash a variety of bad guys. Early versions of the game had the Fantastic Four—with She-Hulk as a selectable character—fighting tiny yellow subterranean dwellers on a dark New York City Street, the scene completed by a huge oil truck crash.

Fantastic Four

Marvel was heavily involved with the artwork in this game, so the characters look exactly like they're supposed to.

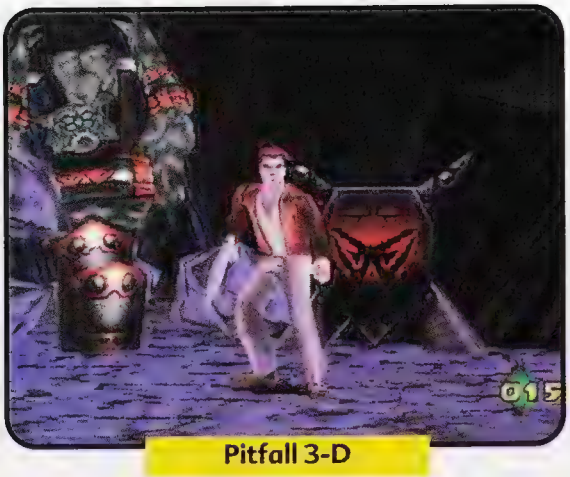
ACTIVISION

TITLE: Apocalypse
SHIPPING: Fall
AVAILABILITY: PlayStation
THE SKINNY: *Apocalypse* asks a user to step into a 3-D world to defeat a false prophet and destroy the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse.

Basically a third-person shooter, *Apocalypse* features perhaps the most unique twist to come out of any video game to date. Bruce Willis plays the role of the user's "virtual buddy," appearing onscreen with the player's character, sharing his life pool, shooting at the bad guys, complimenting the player when he's doing things right and putting him down when he's done poorly. Rock singer Poe ("Angry Johnny") plays one of the game's bosses.

TITLE: Hexen 2
SHIPPING: Fall
AVAILABILITY: PC
THE SKINNY: The simply named sequel to *Hexen: Beyond Heretic* adds more variety to the classic game, as players can choose to be either a Paladin, Crusader, Necromancer or Assassin on a quest to destroy the dreaded Serpent Riders. As players progress, their speed, destructive power and spell-casting abilities will improve. Each class gets nine highly modifiable weapons for smashing foes in a running, swimming and flying 3-D, first-person maze bloodfest.

The game features more than 30 levels of game play, each of them graphically stunning. Players get to run through medieval towns, Egyptian tombs and meso-American ruins, of course. Graphically, this game promises to be superior to the eye-bulging animation of the first game.



Pitfall 3-D

TITLE: Pitfall 3-D: Beyond the Jungle
SHIPPING: Fall
AVAILABILITY: PlayStation
THE SKINNY: Pitfall Harry gets a high-tech facelift in this, one of the oldest (and keenest!) game series around. Harry and all the game's characters appear richly detailed and rendered in 3-D, souping up *Pitfall* immensely.

Players should know the drill here: hop, skip and jump through jungle hazards while collecting bars of gold. This game has some big improvements on the theme, though, as you can now swing on a vine in all directions (instead of just from left to right or right to left). The game gives Harry a whole slew of new challenges to face; there's volcanoes to drop down, temples to explore and a beautiful woman to rescue.

CAPCOM

TITLE: D&D Collection
SHIPPING: Fall
AVAILABILITY: PlayStation, Sega Saturn
THE SKINNY: Capcom has brought two coin-operated D&D games, *Tower of Doom* and *Shadow Over Mystara* together and slapped them on one CD to create a role playing/fighting gamer's delight. Players choose a character (fighter, mage, dwarf or elf) and go through the scenarios, identifying, locating and attempting to destroy the evil force that's been plaguing the land. The game is played as a 2-D-side scroller; enemies pop up from all sides and a menu bar rests on the bottom of the screen to show a user's health, the weapons and armor he carries, and other essential information.

As a character moves through the game, he gains experience, which makes him a better fighter or more proficient spellcaster and can pick up more powerful weapons. The game also features multiple paths, in which a player can decide to accept certain challenges and turn others down.

CLOUD 9 INTERACTIVE

TITLE: Marvel Super-Heroes Creativity Center
SHIPPING: November
AVAILABILITY: PC and Mac
THE SKINNY: This title gives tips and tricks on how to draw all the main characters of the Marvel Universe, with tutorials given by the man himself, Stan Lee. While it's mainly targeted at younger audiences, people who have trouble drawing a straight line with a ruler can pick up a few insights as well.

DISNEY INTERACTIVE

TITLE: Aladdin: The Fate of Agrabah
SHIPPING: September
AVAILABILITY: PC
THE SKINNY: This game continues the tale of the popular Disney character, Aladdin. Players take the part of an all-new character, "The prophesized stranger," hop on a magic carpet and chuck balls of slime, ice and lightning at foes while stopping yet another of Jafar's evil schemes to rule the land. The most exciting sequences involve flying through underground settings, including the lair of the 40 Thieves. During the game, players will get to interact with Aladdin, Genie and Princess Jasmine.

TITLE: Hercules Epic Action
SHIPPING: August
AVAILABILITY: PC
THE SKINNY: Real Disney animation decorates this video game adaptation of "Hercules," where players must prove Hercules a hero worthy of the Realm of the Gods by completing a series of epic tasks. What could be more epic than defending Mount Olympus from the Titans and going to the underworld to "convince" Hades to release the soul of your loved one? Actors Danny DeVito, James Woods and Bobcat Goldthwait provide the sound samples for the game characters Phil (Hercules' trainer), Hades and Pain (the impish demon) respectively.

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

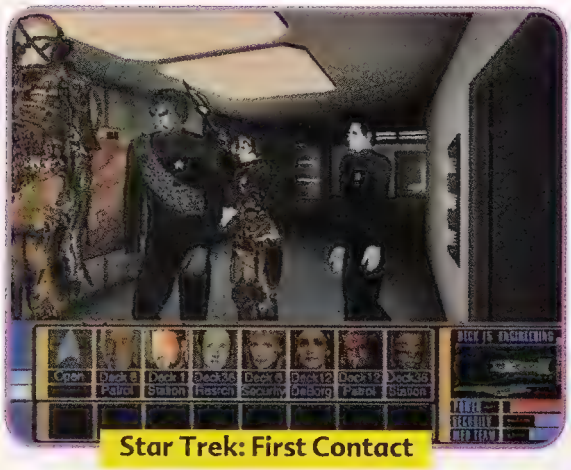
TITLE: Tomb Raider 2
SHIPPING: November
AVAILABILITY: PC, PlayStation, Sega Saturn
THE SKINNY: Lara Croft returns for 15 more levels of action, exploration and puzzles in a game that will far surpass its predecessor. There's a bunch of new monsters, but Lara gets new weapons (like an underwater harpoon) and gymnastic moves (Lara can now swing from overhanging chandeliers) in order to befuddle and defeat them. Graphics will get a heavy overhaul, with more and creepier lighting effects, and this time, Lara will visit a few outdoor environments.

TITLE: Ninja
SHIPPING: January 1998
AVAILABILITY: PlayStation, Sega Saturn
THE SKINNY: Users become Kurosawa, a young ninja, and get drawn into a mystical world of demons, death and sacrifice. Through 14 levels, players must collect weapons, learn new spells and moves in a quest to become the ultimate ninja fighting machine. This game appears to be rendered in true 3-D, making it a bonafide oddity and a must-have.

ELECTRONIC ARTS

TITLE: The Lost World: Jurassic Park
SHIPPING: August
AVAILABILITY: PlayStation, Sega Saturn, Sega Genesis
THE SKINNY: Evolution takes a bit of a twist in this game, as players start out as a Compy—those little dinos that attacked the little girl in the beginning of the movie—and "evolve" (by eating as much as possible) into Velociraptors, T-Rexes and, eventually, human hunters and scientists in a game of intense fun and bloodshed. The T-Rex is

Aladdin: The Fate of Agrabah



Star Trek: First Contact

super cool—fans of the Jurassic Park books, movies or even video game fans in general have to see this beast hulking around, gobbling up little pink humans.

INTERPLAY

TITLE: Fallout: A Post Nuclear Adventure
SHIPPING: Fall
AVAILABILITY: PC and Mac
THE SKINNY: The goal of the post-apocalyptic RPG *Fallout* is simple—find something to fix your water purifier or die. Players take the part of a subterranean vault-dweller who must leave his home and enter a strange world filled with killer mutants, radiation and gangs. To win, a player has to find the right blend of hostility and diplomacy.

The game features turn-based battles (a player can target certain body parts to wound an enemy), over 50 mini-quests and a top-down view with lushly detailed backgrounds. The end of the world has never looked this good.

MICROPROSE

TITLE: Guardians: Agents of Justice
SHIPPING: February 1998
AVAILABILITY: PC
THE SKINNY: *Guardians: Agents of Justice* from Microprose will redefine cool for superhero games. You start with one superhero (either created from scratch or a pre-created hero from a list of 14) and a small HQ and, as users gain fame, more heroes come join your cause. Money is earned for completing missions and sending bad guys to jail; players get to buy new neato gizmos and build up their headquarters in a variety of ways. Heroes can improve, modify and combine their skills to defeat their opponents in turn-based battles. The game's characters have more than 80 powers at their disposal.

Guardians will also allow multiple players to link up over a network connection, through the Internet or via a modem.

TITLE: Star Trek: First Contact
SHIPPING: February 1998
AVAILABILITY: PC
THE SKINNY: The evil Borg are trying to take over the *Enterprise-E* and it's up to you to stop them in Microprose's new video game adaptation of the latest Star Trek film. Basically a first-person shooter, *Contact* adds some nice wrinkles (and a lot of strategy) to the mix. Players can choose to play as any one of the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" cast and the enemy Borg's artificial intelligence adapts to a player's attacks—users will continually have to modify their strategies to win the game. Along the way, users can consult the *Enterprise*'s computers to create new weapons and technology with which to defeat the Borg. Time is of the essence, though, because while a player is out shooting the Borg, the Borg are busy turning crew members into Borg and taking control of the *Enterprise*'s systems. W

E3 Special Report:

'Youngblood' Looks Like a Winner

By Greg Orlando

Rob Liefeld's *Youngblood* video game is finally here. And it may be worth the wait.

The former Marvel and Image artist and current owner of Awesome Entertainment has joined forces with GT Interactive to create a video game based on Liefeld's superhero team, Youngblood. While the game is still being tinkered with and despite delays in the production process, *Youngblood* looks like a bonafide winner. The game will be released for the Sony PlayStation and PCs in November.

Most comic-based video games are eyesores, relying on tired video game clichés and perspectives. Simply put, the bulk of these games are 2-D fighting side-scrollers that merely ask a player to jam on a joystick's buttons to survive. *Youngblood*, however, is a strategy and role-playing game that takes the 2-D perspective and tosses it in the garbage. *Youngblood* is played on a top-down map that's viewed from overhead. Characters and villains are all rendered in 3-D and each scene is decorated with comic book-style background maps. Graphically, everything we've seen looks beautiful.

***Youngblood* is a strategy role-playing video game with cool 3-D effects and looks to be a winner.**

Players get to choose their heroes, create a real superhero team, take the team into battle and watch their characters improve their various skills. The PlayStation version supports one or two-player action; up to four players can play the PC versions. There's even a "deathmatch" mode on the PC versions where two players can have their teams fight to the death.

The game resembles a multi-person version of Blizzard's popular game *Diablo*. Players choose their team (which can be made up of two to four characters, six on PC versions) from a pool of seven heroes. Each hero has his own strengths and weaknesses; Badrock, for example, is highly inexperienced, but is nonetheless super-strong and invulnerable. Diehard is strong and fast, but limited by his half-human/half-machine makeup, etc. In creating a team, players must keep in mind that different heroes interact differently with each other; some characters will work together, others will refuse to do so.

After selecting their team, players move their heroes through 11 interconnected missions on different terrains—even Hell itself—battling evil mutants and other bad guys. All the game's action and fighting take place in real-time; a user can control any hero at will, or allow them to resolve combat on their own. In battle, heroes can use their special abilities, fists or any weapons they find to KO their enemies. Once a mission is completed, a player can take his team back to Youngblood headquarters for training. There, a hero can improve his skills and learn new fighting moves.

The ultimate goal of the game is to defeat the evil Dr. Leviticus, but before that can happen, players will have to encounter the game's four "hidden" characters, discover the traitor who lurks in Youngblood's headquarters and decide if they want to ally themselves with Leviticus' ex-partner Giger. Allying themselves with Giger will bring temporary rewards, but it's inevitable that he will betray them, so players will have to end the alliance before too long.

AVENGERS #1

THE HEROES RETURN IN THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

KURT BUSIEK

GEORGE PEREZ

THIS DECEMBER

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THE TOY CHEST BY SCOTT BEATTY

VILLAINS RULE!

Batman's back...and there's gonna be trouble!

Kenner continues its line of **Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight** action figures with a third assortment to debut this December. Based on one single nightmarish "Elseworld" where criminals rule, Kenner's 7-inch LOTDK collection sports some of the company's finest sculpting and deco. This time around, the Penguin makes an appearance, along with Underwater Assault Batman and Jungle Range Robin. But the best by far is a nifty Kelley Jones-esque **Man-Bat** with a whopping 15-inch wingspan and a cute li'l security badge on his torn shirt sporting the mug of alter ego Kirk Langstrom!

In other news, Kenner is adding Bat-baddie **The Mad Hatter** to its Animated Batman (Batman: D.U.O. Force) rogues gallery. Attendees of July's San Diego Comic Con got a sneak peek of Jervis Tetch at Kenner's convention booth, complete with his li'l robot bunny sidekick. We'll show you more pics of the Hatter in the very near future, so keep readin'!

MAN-BAT

JUNGLE RANGE ROBIN

PENGUIN

UNDERWATER ASSAULT BATMAN

THE MAD HATTER

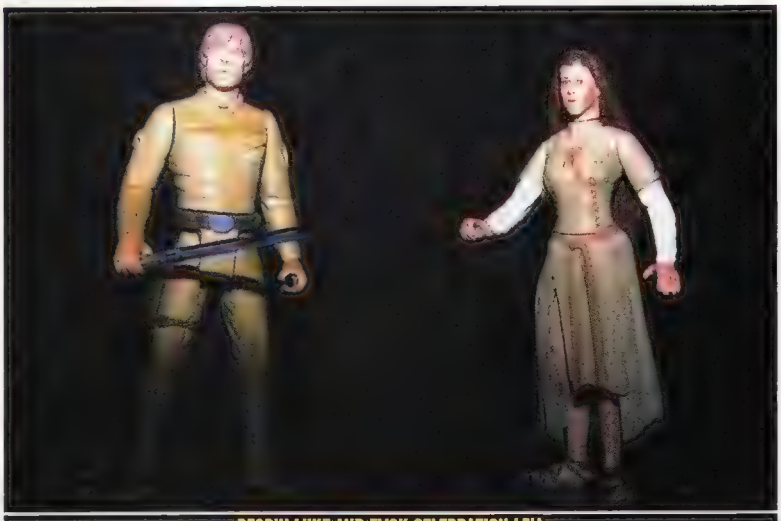
NEW TO THE FORCE

Also at the San Diego Comic Con, collectors of all things Star Wars got an advance look at the latest addition to Kenner's mega-successful Star Wars: Power of the Force collection: **Princess Leia in Ewok Celebration Garb**! Joining such recent standouts as Grand Moff Tarkin, Garindan (Imperial Snitch) and the eagerly awaited Princess Leia as Jabba's Prisoner, the new Leia, portrayed in her snazzy Ewok-sewn dress, is the first-ever offering of this character—which pretty much guarantees fans'll have embolisms trying to snag her. Ewoks, unfortunately, are not included.

In addition, a newly sculpted **Luke Skywalker in Bespin Gear** was on display. Fans at the show went ga-ga over the fact that this Luke actually sports a removable hand, which makes recreating Luke's epic lightsaber duel with Vader that much more realistic!

For more limb-rending action, Kenner showed off its latest Cinema Scene 3-Pack, **Cantina Showdown**, which features newly sculpted versions of Ben Kenobi and Ponda Baba (but sadly, without removable arm), in addition to that wily scoundrel **Dr. Evazan**.

And finally, showgoers got their first peek at the Kenner website exclusive **B'omarr Monk**, a super-cool offering that dwarfs the rest of the 3 3/4-inch figures and includes nifty spidery legs and the Monk's brain floating in blue liquid. This one is sure to take the prize as Kenner's best exclusive to date! Information on how to order B'omarr Monk will debut on the Official Kenner Star Wars website (**http://starwars.hasbro.com/**) at the end of August.



BESPIN LUKE AND EWOK CELEBRATION LEIA

KENNER'S LATEST EXCLUSIVE: THE B'OMARR MONK

KENNER'S CANTINA SHOWDOWN 3-PACK FEATURES DR. EVAZAN, PONDA BABA AND OBI-WAN KENOBI!

TOY BIZ LAUNCHES VIDEO GAME TOYS

It's official. Toy Biz and Capcom have joined forces to produce action figures based on two of Capcom's mega-selling video game offerings: ***Street Fighter vs. X-Men*** and ***Resident Evil***! First up is a five-inch action figure assortment of Street Fighter vs. X-Men two-packs, shipping this Christmas, which will include Ryu vs. Magneto, Cyclops vs. M. Bison, Wolverine vs. Akuma, and Ken vs. Sabretooth. Each two-pack features characters with accessories or action features. The second assortment, set for a spring 1998 release, will feature two-pack match-ups such as Rogue vs. Cammy, as well as characters like Chun Li, Apocalypse, Storm, Charlie, Juggernaut and Zangief.

For Resident Evil, still in pre-developmental stages, expect to see five-inch figures of such game notables as good guys Jill and Chris, as well as the evil Tyrant. All of these figures should hit toy shelves early in 1998.

OTHER BIZ-NESS

Toy Biz will launch a small assortment of action figures in support of the upcoming big-budget **"Kull the Conqueror"** flick, starring the Robert E. Howard sword-wielding hero immortalized in the pages of Marvel Comics. Kevin Sorbo of TV's "Hercules: The Incredible Journeys" plays Kull on the big screen, with the lovely Tia Carrere in the villainess role. Kull action figures, including Kull the Conqueror, Kull the King and Talegaro (the villain) should currently be available in toy stores everywhere. But alas, no Tia figure. Rats.

1998 will also see the debut of Toy Biz's premiere line of **Blade** action figures to coincide with Wesley Snipes' launch of the noted Marvel Comics vampire as a big-screen franchise. The Biz plans to recreate dynamic likenesses of such "Blade" actors as Snipes (with two Blade figures in the first assortment), Kris Kristofferson (Blade's mentor Whisper) and Stephen Dorff (the villain Deacon Frost). Look for Blade figures to ship sometime in February.

STREET FIGHTER VS. X-MEN

WHISPER, BLADE AND DEACON FROST

AKUMA

KEN

SABRETOOTH

PHYSICAL GRAPHITTI

At last July's Chicago ComiCon, Graphitti Designs unveiled what is sure to drive fans of Mike Allred's *Madman* comic series bonkers: the first **Madman** action figure. Snappy! Sculpted with exacting detail and multi-point articulation (neck, shoulders, biceps, elbows, waist, hips and knees), the 8-inch Madman figure may include such accessories as an interchangeable head (with goggles and crash helmet), waist holster with pistol, rocket pack, laser cannon and even Madman's signature yo-yo.

The first of a planned assortment that will also include action figures based on Matt Wagner's **Grendel** (Hunter Rose, baby!) and **Mage**, Madman leads off Graphitti's foray into action figures, having already proven its capability of providing the coolest comic items around with nifty T-shirts, sculptures and other collectibles. Though

The Madman action figure might even come with an extra head!

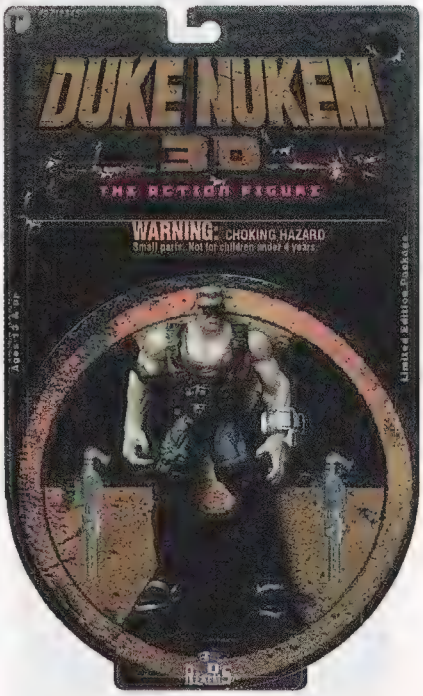
details are still being finalized, Graphitti might just offer action figures based on other high-profile independent comics offerings in the future. Keep reading future installments of "Toy Chest" for details!

Graphitti has figures lined up for Grendel...

...and Mage.

NUKE 'EM, DUKE!

Also on the video game-turned-action figures front, be on the lookout for Duke Nukem action figures from the folks at ReSaurus, makers of the recent Lost World dino-puppets. Two versions of Duke will hit stores in October: one standard figure (200,000 pieces, $8.99 suggested retail) with his standard assortment of weapons; and one limited-edition Internet figure (50,000 pieces, $10.99-$12.99 suggested retail), which includes the standard weapons in addition to Duke's Freeze Thrower weapon, plus a CD-ROM of the original game and several demos. Look for playsets and vehicles for Duke to show up sometime in 1998.



WARNING! Due to the intense, primal and the liable to screw-you-up-for-life content of these magazines, all STRANGE TALES titles are NOT CODE-APPROVED and are suggested for mature readers!

STRANGE TALES®

Stories of arcane rebellion against the natural order

Man-Thing

Satana

Werewolf By Night

This fall

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TUROK: ACTION FIGURE HUNTER

Playmates recently acquired the toy rights to produce action figures based on Acclaim's *Turok* comic series. **Turok: Dinosaur Hunter** toys are slated for release sometime in late 1998 and may include such series noteworthies as the following: the present-day Turok, Joshua; the "classic" 1800s Turok; the Bionosaurs; some Dinosoids; and the villainous Campaigner. Judging from the past success of dino-based toys among kids, Turok is certainly a no-brainer in the action figure market.

LADY DEMON

THE ENTIRE M.A.C. CHAOS! ASSORTMENT

M.A.C. CHAOS! LINE-UP COMPLETE!

Moore Action Collectibles' chief Clayburn Moore unveiled the complete M.A.C. line of action figures devoted to Chaos! Comics favorites Lady Death, Purgatori, Evil Ernie and **Lady Demon** at last July's 1997 Wizard Chicago Comicon. Check 'em out! Clay and the M.A.C. staff are currently hard at work on the company's forthcoming Witchblade assortment for Top Cow, as well as the follow-up Chaos! assortment, which'll include new Chaos! favorite **Chastity**!

TOY BITES

• **Galoob** has dropped its license for **Star Trek** and **Babylon 5**, which means collectors won't be seeing any more Micro Machines devoted to either sci-fi franchise.

• Later production runs of **McFarlane Toys**' new **KISS** figures won't sport any of the earlier offerings' letter action figure stands spelling out the band's name when you buy 'em all. Production difficulties have resulted in McFarlane substituting little replicas of the original band line-up's solo albums (you remember, the ones with just one KISS member's kisser on each sleeve), which should be just as collectible.

• **Playmates'** planned **Zorro** line, based on the forthcoming film starring Antonio Banderas as the masked avenger, has been pushed back to December.

• **Trendmasters** will launch toys based on **Casper the Friendly Ghost** this fall, with future toys devoted to such Harvey Publications characters as Hot Stuff and Richie Rich a strong possibility. **W**

ToyFare *Editor Scott Beatty prefers* Q'Bert *over* Duke Nukem *any day of the week.*

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT *WIZARD* WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) Blink (X-Men)
The spunky mutant heroine from "Age of Apocalypse" is pretty darn popular. So popular, in fact, that if Toy Biz don't make her, we're liable to have a riot on our hands! For the lost time, she'd have nifty sizzling "teleport" portals and removable energy javelins. Now get to it, Toy Biz!

2) Darth Vader w/ Removable Helmet (Star Wars)
Darth with Removable Helmet. Get it? Y'see, if you take his helmet off, it's just plain ol' scarred and burned Anakin Skywalker underneath! Tell us you wouldn't buy two!

3) Superman: New Costume (Superman: Man of Steel)
Though comic fans are divided on whether or not "Electro" Superman is groovy or just plain sucks wind, toy collectors still want him. A lot. Give him a blue sparking chest and light-up eyes and he'd be nifty-sweet.

4) X-Man (X-Men)
This alternate-future Nate Grey from "Age of Apocalypse" would come with snap-on TK blasts and light-up eyes! And we'll say it just one more time: Throw in pal Threnody and make it a two-pack!

5) Nightwing (DC Heroes)
Anybody missing the groovy *Nightwing* ongoing series from DC should check it out, 'cause it's got collectors clamoring for a new Dick Grayson figure with Bat-rangs, truncheon sticks and a retractable jump-line for roof-hoppin' action in that mean town o' Blüdhaven.

6) "New" X-Men Boxed Set (X-Men)
After Toy Biz's current boxed set of "classic" X-Men, the next logical step would be to make the international X-Men from *Giant-Size X-Men #1*, including Banshee, Thunderbird, Storm, Colossus, Nightcrawler and Sunfire. Ya listening, Toy Biz?

7) Wonder Woman (DC Heroes)
Even though Kenner's Total Justice line has ended, DC fans still wanna see an updated version of the amazing Amazon. Just give her the golden lasso, plus shield, spear and armor, *a la Kingdom Come*, and WW'd literally fly off toy shelves.

8) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
It would involve all kinds of complex legal maneuvering between Toy Biz and Kenner, but action figures based on DC/Marvel Amalgams like Super-Soldier, Dark Claw, Dr. Strangefate and Iron Lantern would make fans go loopy.

9) Bastion (X-Men)
The X-villain rumored to be the Sentinel Nimrod would come with peachy-keen light-up mutant restraining manacles. Don't ask why.

10) Biggs Darklighter (Star Wars)
Okay, now that Kenner wised up and gave us Grand Moff Tarkin, it's about time we see Luke's Tatooine pal and X-Wing dogfight fodder Biggs Darklighter, who finally got some expanded screen time in "Star Wars: The Special Edition." Go, Biggs!

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

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HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

GRAND PRIZE

XENA
Critter of Chico, Calif.
It's Xena, Warrior Princess of Disney's world. Spun off from a Mattel Hunchback of Notre Dame Esmerelda doll, this Xena figure's got more attitude than Demi Moore herself.

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials. The talented Grand Prize Winner rides away with three DC statues from Comic Book Champions: Silver Age Superman, Silver Age Joker and Modern Age Batman! The Runner-Up scores two of the above statues, while everyone else gets one of 'em! Amazing work, people!

Thanks a bunch to the folks at Comic Book Champions for the fantastic prizes!

COMIC BOOK CHAMPIONS™

RUNNER-UP

ALAN SCOTT GREEN LANTERN
Shad Miland of Menomonie, Wis.
Turning the flame off a Toy Biz Johnny Storm figure, Shad showed us the Green Lantern power of making his imagination come to life with this fine Alan Scott.

GLORY AND AVENGELYNE

Brad McCurry of Shelby, N.C.

Just look what you can do with a repaint. Here are two figures, two completely different characters, which are both made from a Playmates Voodoo figure.

WARLORD

Felipe Monaco of Miami, Fla.

Could this Warlord figure be a mocked-up Kenner Super Powers Flash figure? We can't quite tell. But despite the fact that we have no idea what this Warlord figure is made from, you have to admit it's a kick-butt job.

PUNISHER 2099 and FUTURE IRON MAN

Ed Detterline of Glenolden, Pa.

Ed formed the next century's Punisher from a Toy Biz Iceman II head and a Toy Biz Punisher body, using the shoulder pads from a Toy Biz Stealth Armor Iron Man, and creating his collar and coat from coffee filters dipped in white glue. His future Iron Man came from a Stealth Armor IM and various pieces of "household junk."

FARTMAN

Dan Buczynski of Pittsburgh, Pa.

Howard Stern would be proud of this figure that represents his Fartman character so perfectly. And it would boost Howard's ego to know that this figure was retooled from a Toy Biz Hercules figure.

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
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a look at some cool stuff with an alternative twist

Unlock the Door to Fun

Andi Watson's lighthearted 'Skeleton Key' mixes everyday drama and surreal fantasy

Practice makes perfect. That's one thing that British cartoonist Andi Watson learned when he started his comic *Skeleton Key* back in 1995. After two years of monthly issues, Watson has quietly constructed one of the most thoroughly enjoyable series being published today. If you think comics can't be fun and cute anymore (without being sappy), then you owe it to yourself to try *Skeleton Key*.

Back before he started *Skeleton Key*, Watson drew a comic called *Samurai Jam*, a slice-of-life series about skateboarding and other fun stuff. The book didn't catapult him into superstardom, so he envisioned *Skeleton Key* as a way to appeal to a more mainstream audience. "I thought I would meet people halfway," Watson recalls. "I could do a mainstream book that I'd like to read. I put in the trappings of superhero comics like costumes and other fantastical elements, but I wanted to make sure I had a fully realized setting and a couple of fairly detailed characters for it as well."

Watson's initial concept for the series involved Tamsin Mary Cates, a young high-school girl who discovers a key that can open doors to other dimensions. On one of her excursions, Tamsin digs up Kitsune, an ancient Japanese fox spirit who can take on human form and ends up joining her on adventures and at school.

After some initial plot-driven stories, Watson took a turn to develop some stories based more on character interaction. "The whole concept was designed to have a really basic framework in which I could tell any kind of story," Watson explains. "I could move the story from dimension to dimension and do a detective story, or I could do a Jane Austen period piece. I could hop around, so that kept it fresh for me. Ironically enough, since issue #19, I've been bringing fantastic elements into the fictional Canadian town of Garfield and having things happen from there. That gives me more room for character development."

In addition to the stories, the art on the comic has evolved immensely, due mostly to the monthly deadline Watson has maintained since the book started. "I started off kind of crude and cartoony," he says. "Maybe I was mixed up in my head, but I thought if I did this slightly realistic comic style, maybe people would be drawn to it, but now I don't think that was the case at all. Gradually, I worked my way through it, and I think that since issue #9 I've found my own voice. I don't think my art looks particularly like anyone else's and I've found my own kind of design sense. The effect is simple and cartoony, but detailed enough so I can convey fairly subtle emotions on the characters' faces."

By looking at current issues of *Skeleton Key*, it would seem that everything evolved smoothly.

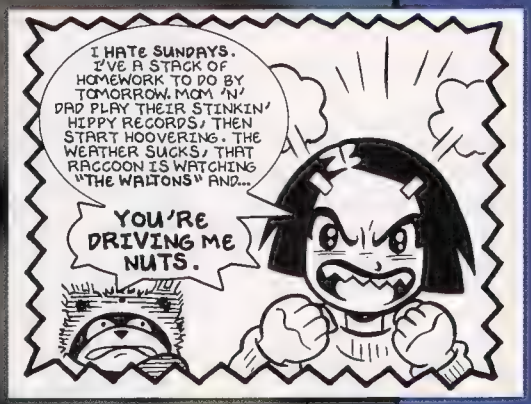
The dimension-hopping high-schooler Tamsin Mary Cates enjoys a tongue-bath from Japanese fox spirit Kitsune.

Kitsune enjoys one of the pleasures of taking human form.

by tom palmer jr.

Left: Tamsin and the shapeshifting Kitsune get much more than a tan at the beach.

Below: Even traveling to different worlds won't change the fact that Sundays stink



but there have been a few minor adjustments that had to be made—one of which involved getting accustomed to the shorter length of the comic. An issue of *Skeleton Key* is only 16 pages long (to keep the cover price low), so Watson experimented with both multi-issue, extended storylines and self-contained issues before finding something comfortable. "I think I like shorter stories," he claims. "I think I can do something fairly involved in three issues. But 16 pages can be especially tight when you like to do a lot of dialogue, which sucks up a lot of pages. You can't have too many talking heads, because the plot demands that you kick things along. You have to discipline yourself and make sure you don't meander too much."

One of the biggest things Watson has had to adjust to is setting his story in Garfield, an imaginary town in Saskatchewan. Until recently, Watson spent all his life in England, so it was a challenge to make his fictional setting realistic. "I've tried to make it as real as it can be," Watson says. "You can't get all the details right, so it's good to have people that will set you straight. Sometimes British-isms slip into the dialogue. For instance, Canadians would never say 'ice hockey skates'; they call them 'hockey skates.'"

Despite all the little hassles, Watson is happy he has an opportunity to get his comics out there for people to see. "I do comics, and there's nothing else I'd rather do," he says. "I like drawing and I like telling stories. It gives me a lot of satisfaction." W

Tom Palmer jr. is sick of being so friggin' nice all the time. 'Pucker up and kiss his lily-white ass, you pathetic pieces of wretched refuse.'

F.Y.I.

Skeleton Key is published every month (issue #25 will be out in August) by Amaze Ink for the low, low price of $1.75. Get your store to snag a copy for you. Or you can order right from the publisher by writing to Amaze Ink/Slave Labor Graphics, 979 S. Bascom Ave, San Jose, CA 95128 or calling 1-800-866-8929. Some back issues are available, as well as two trade paperbacks. *Beyond the Threshold* collects the first six issues, while *Celestial Calendar* gathers up a mammoth 12 issues.

Watson's Recommended Reading

"My favorite comics right now would have to be anything by Jaime Hernandez, like *Whoa, Nellie!* or the *Maggie and Hopey Color Special*. *Kane* by Paul Grist is an excellent book, as well as *Akiko* by Mark Crilley. That's about it. I'm going to feel really guilty half an hour from now when I remember somebody I left out!"

To All Good Things...

Well, folks, this is it. The last "Palmer's Picks." It's been 68 issues and almost six years (making this the longest continuously running column in *Wizard*, as a matter of fact) for me and it's time to move on.

There're a bunch of reasons I'm leaving that are too boring to get into, but one of the main ones is the increased small press coverage in the rest of *Wizard*. In case you hadn't noticed, a lot more small-press books like *Strangers in Paradise*, *Hepcats* and *Box Office Poison* have been popping up regularly in full-length articles and other parts of the magazine, and they'll continue to do so. The reason? There's a lot of damn fine comics out there that deserve more attention than the two pages I can offer here in *Wizard*.

Of course, it wouldn't be a proper sign-off without a bunch of thank yous. It's been an outright joy to work with the kooky gang here at *Wizard*. For some reason, they let me stay and I can't thank them enough for that.

I also have to thank the numerous cartoonists I've interviewed over the years. Your work has inspired me, and I want to thank you for allowing me to spotlight your comics, even though some of you probably thought talking to a "mainstream" mag would ruin your rep.

I can't forget to mention my friends and family (you know who you are), and my legion of bitter enemies.

And I also want to give a shout-out to all the people who read what I wrote and maybe took a chance on a new small-press comic. Without you guys there would probably be a lot fewer quality comics out there.

Just in case you need some reading material for the next few weeks, check out all these comics: Bill Willingham's *Coventry*, Marc Hempel's *TUG & buster*, Debbie Drechsler's *Nowhere*, Joe Matt's *Peep Show*, Zander Cannon's *Replacement God and Other Stories*, Jessica Abel's *Artbabe*, Jason Lutes' *Berlin*, Charles Vess' *The Book of Ballads & Sagas*, Dylan Horrocks' *Pickle*, anything by Joe Sacco and Ivan Brunetti's *Schizo* (Whew!).

Thank you and good night.

— Tom

THE SKINNY

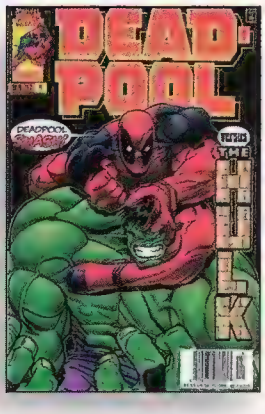
Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST | 5 EXCELLENT | 4 GOOD | 3 SO-SO | 2 UGH | 1 CRAPOLA

DEADPOOL

Can a killer be a nice guy?



Issues Reviewed: #1-#7
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: Joe Kelly, Ed McGuinness and Nathan Massengill
Price/Frequency: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: A tortured product of the Weapon X program, Wade Wilson is imbued with an artificial healing factor, which he uses to his advantage as a mercenary.

The Good: There's a very lighthearted tone to this book. From the front cover, to the splash pages, to the titles (Issue #1 is titled "Hey, It's Deadpool!"), this comic just screams fun. Deadpool's wise-crackin', practical-joking attitude further fuels the fun fire. His constant pop-culture references—everything from Cindy Crawford to "Speed"—keep the book fresh and hip.

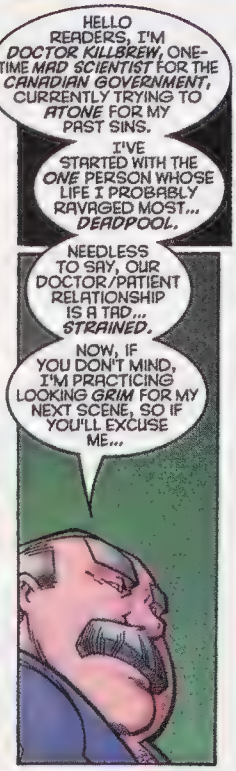
The manga-esque cartoony art style fits the lighthearted tone quite well, reminding you this book never takes itself too seriously. Even with his mask on, you can tell when Deadpool's cracking a smirk or going even further off the deep end.

The first two pages of every issue tell you about the current characters you need to know as well as recapping what's been happening in recent issues, making it reader-friendly. And it's done in such an entertaining way each issue that it stays fresh. In issue #4, the splash page actually had the characters talking to the readers, explaining who they are before jumping into the story.

The Bad: While this book is chock full o' fun, unfortunately, it's very hard to accept the character of Deadpool. He's a ruthless killer-for-hire who's constantly trying to endear himself to the reader by cracking jokes. So when readers learn of Deadpool's tragic past, it's difficult to sympathize with him because of his happy-go-lucky attitude. If played straight like the Punisher, it'd be much easier to relate to him.

Also, the supporting characters are never given any backstory. An old blind woman named Blind Alfred is Deadpool's roommate/prisoner, but it's never ever explained what she's doing there, or why she's his prisoner (and why's she named "Alfred"?). With no depth to them, the supporting cast just doesn't add anything to the series.

The plots themselves are a bit simplistic, never really challenging the readers—or Deadpool himself. And with obscure villains like the Vamp and the Taskmaster, the creators really need to do their homework. The Taskmaster, normally a wise-crackin' ass-whupping villain, spoke in a stilted and scholarly tongue.



The Buzz: Joe Kelly is quickly gaining a name for himself with his work on *Daredevil*, particularly with the recent announcement that he'll be taking over *X-Men*. Throw in the fact that readers really dig *Deadpool* and you've got a winner.

The Skinny: While everything about this book exudes fun, it's just too hard to accept Deadpool as the protagonist. Having a cold-blooded killer portrayed in a light way as the main character is just a bit too hard to swallow.

Even in the stories' introduction, Deadpool *screams "fun."*

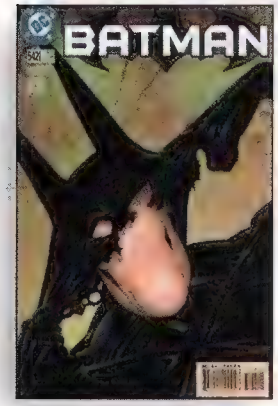
It's kind of hard to like and laugh at a cold-blooded killer.

The Verdict: 3 SO-SO

BATMAN

The Knight is lost in darkness

Issues Reviewed: #539-#546
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Doug Moench, Kelley Jones and John Beatty
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly



What You Need to Know: His parents murdered in front of him, young Bruce Wayne made them a promise: to rid Gotham City of crime. As he grew older, he used his inherited fortune and trained his body and mind to physical perfection to become the crimefighter Batman.

The Good: These stories are highly psychological. The dialogue of Batman and his villains explains the make-up of that character's mind, instead of just being witty banter. This results in an interesting and deep feel for the book. For instance, when Wayne/Batman decides to go into the WayneTech offices, it's because he says he's been neglecting his Bruce Wayne persona, and needs to "practice" being him. The way it's phrased does a lot for your understanding of his dual psyche.

The villains created in this book have complex makeups as well. "Faceless" is not just a murderer, he's working on a lack of identity, and murders other people while dressed up as them in order to try to prove that he does, in fact, exist. "The Undertaker" creates sculptures from bones he robbed from graves to prove there is beauty after death. All serve to add a more macabre feel to Gotham's criminal element.

The dark aspects of the stories and Kelley Jones' stylistically dark artwork come together to give the book a great spooky tone. There's lots of excellent creepy silhouetted shots of Batman in a Gothic atmosphere.

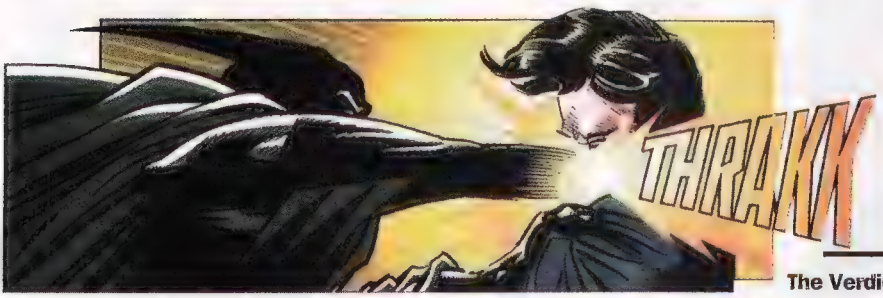
The Bad: The stories are trying to be so dark, Gothic and psychological, that major elements of the Batman mythos are sacrificed. How? Follow us: Many of the characters are completely out of character. For Alfred to fear a woman entering

Bruce Wayne's life goes against what readers know Alfred wants for him. Bruce Wayne overplays his playboy personality at WayneTech so much, he's embarrassingly dopey—not exactly how a calculated mind like Batman would play the "part" of Bruce Wayne. And even Commissioner Gordon—normally a hands-on lawman—is reduced to a passive secretary by simply dictating information to Batman.

The elements that work to spark intriguing plotlines end up fizzling toward the end. Villains like Boneyard and Faceless are discovered and beaten in clichéd, neat-and-tidy climaxes; you get more dramatic detective work in an episode of "Matlock." Not to mention the recent storyline (#544-#546) where the Joker conjures Etrigan the Demon (a wee bit over the top, even for Joker) ends with a whimper when, obviously, Etrigan doesn't kill Batman or the Joker—as is expected by the plot set-up. Plus, when The Spectre shows up in #540-#541, it seems only to serve as an excuse for a philosophical argument between himself and Batman.

The Buzz: Deemed a failure at the box office, "Batman & Robin" may cool interest in the Bat-titles. Only time will tell.

The Skinny: "Dark" is such the thrust of *Batman* that it has sacrificed characterization of the major players, dramatic detective work and action sequences.



The spooky art adds to the psychological nature of the book.

The conclusions in Batman are too neat and tidy.

The Verdict: 3 SO-SO

THUNDERBOLTS

Marvel 'heroes' scheme the crime of the century

Issues Reviewed: #1-#5, *Annual* '97
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell
Price/Frequency: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: With the majority of Marvel's heroes "killed" by Onslaught, a superhero group called the Thunderbolts have pledged to fill the gap. However, they are really Baron Zemo and the Masters of Evil, who are using public and governmental trust to fulfill Zemo's goal: world domination.

The Good: This is one of the most surprising and original concepts to come out of Marvel in a long time. What was expected to be a second-rate *Avengers* knock-off title had a completely unexpected twist at the end of issue #1 when the Thunderbolts' true identities were revealed. The fact that it worked as a surprise, and nobody saw it coming is an achievement all its own.

The characters are written believably as villains learning to pose as heroes. In one issue, Mach-1 (the Beetle) takes a crook's loot only to face Zemo's scolding as it compromises their identities. And that's just one challenge to Zemo's master plan. Issue after issue, the scheme is put in jeopardy when questions about their origins arise, when other heroes and villains think they recognize one of them, or even when they have to take on a new team member—who isn't a villain at all! At each turn, Zemo manipulates everyone past the problem.

This book goes a long way to elevate Zemo from a two-bit Captain America nemesis to elite villain status. The way he's still using his criminal knowledge as a hero is fun to watch, and you find yourself rooting for him. Bizarrely, you're also rooting for those Thunderbolts under him who are enjoying being heroes more than they ever enjoyed crime. In that case, you're rooting for them to turn against the team. And that's not to mention Meteorite, who, in a subplot, is manipulating her own power play within the team. It's highly entertaining.

Each issue of the book can be someone's first, with constant recaps on who the characters are and what they're doing. It's building up with genuine anticipation for the return of the heroes out of curiosity for what will happen when they come face-to-face.

The Bad: So far, each issue follows the same path—supervillains posing as heroes fighting other supervillains. The subplots, while intriguing, don't add enough variety to the book; at the end of each issue, the reader is ultimately left wanting the same exact thing: when will the conflict with the heroes happen?

The Buzz: *Thunderbolts* is hot and fans are enjoying the concept. Thunderbolts are even making appearances in other titles, and the upcoming "Heroes Return" event will put a spotlight right on this title.

The Skinny: The charm is in the concept, and while the book is delivered brilliantly, it so far is surviving off that concept. Thankfully, you can't help but to be on the edge of your seat waiting to see where the concept will eventually lead this book.

When Citizen V (a.k.a. Baron Zemo) confronts the "new" Masters of Evil, he gives 'em a learnin' they'll never forget!

The Thunderbolts *concept is one of the coolest to ever come down the pike.*

The Verdict: 5 **EXCELLENT**

"There is no storm such as this. It is a sickness in the sky. It is crafted in chaos, and even the darkness breathes."

–Orim, Journals of the Weatherlight upon arrival in Rath

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The Rath Cycle

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What has been released, will not be contained.

Available October '97

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PICKS

BEHOLD!

THEY'RE MAD, I TELL YOU!

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN SEPTEMBER

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #8

ALPHA FLIGHT #4

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #8

DC COMICS Old Justice League America members never die, they just go to Hub City and sell their services to the highest bidder. Blue Beetle and Booster Gold are the Heroes for Rent, and in this issue, they fight a beautiful, yet mysterious woman who knows a little too much about them. By Steve Vance, John Delaney and Ron Boyd. Also this month, check out *Adventures in the DC Universe Annual* #1 where Impulse, Doctor Fate, Superboy and other DC heroes must retrieve magical amulets before the universe faces serious danger. By Hillary J. Bader, John Delaney, Mike Manley, Dick Giordano and others. *Adventures* #8—$1.75; *Adventures Annual* #1—**$3.95**

AKIKO #18

SIRIUS Akiko, the space-travelling fourth grader, and her friends attempt to liberate the Prince of Smoo from the evil clutches of his mother Queen Alia Rellapor (who may or may not be as evil as she seems) in the conclusion to *Akiko's* first mega-storyarc. By Mark Crilley, who says, "This is just the beginning. Starting with issue #19 we're going to do a series of much shorter stories, even single-issue stories. So issue #19 becomes the perfect jumping-on point for anyone who's been reluctant to join up with this series." **$2.50**

ALPHA FLIGHT #4

MARVEL The evil mutant master of hypnotism Mesmero is out to create a new world order. The first step in his master plan involves putting Alpha Flight's new recruits (Murmur, Radius and Flex) and Japan's Sunfire under his control. Now he only has 4,999,999,996 (give or take a few million) people left to enslave. Good thinking, Mesmero. By Steven T. Seagle, Scott Clark and Chris Carlson. **$1.99**

AQUAMAN #38

DC COMICS While Aquaman, his ex-partner Tempest (formerly Aqualad) and sometime girlfriend Dolphin sort out their love triangle, human beings visit Poseidonis for the first time in thousands of years and capitalism runs rampant. Does this mean the place'll be turned into a tourist trap, selling "My parents went to Poseidonis and all I got was this lousy T-shirt" shirts and other kitsch? Could be. By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and P.L. Palmiotti. **$1.75**

BART SIMPSON'S TREEHOUSE OF HORROR #3

BONGO The Simpsons may be the wackiest family in Springfield, U.S.A., but if they don't unravel the mystery of who's snatching the bodies of Springfield's residents, they'll be the deadest. This year's goody-filled Halloween Special is brought to you by Matt Groening, Evan Dorkin and Bill Morrison. Dorkin says, "It's sort of like Homer versus a bunch of Osmonds from space. They're taking over Springfield and it's just a total rip on all these sci-fi films and the clichés in them." **$2.50**

BATMAN/PREDATOR III: BLOOD TIES #1 (OF 4)

DC COMICS Hoping to teach its child the joys of hunting, an

BATMAN/PREDATOR III: BLOOD TIES #1

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #12

GREEN LANTERN #92

MAJOR BUMMER #4

adult Predator and its son come to Gotham City. The child's target is Batman's kid sidekick Robin, and to save Robin's life, Batman may be forced to ask his foe Mr. Freeze for some help. In the interest of enlightened education, these are some simple things you can do if a Predator's hunting you: 1) Scream like a girl, and 2) Run. By Chuck Dixon, Rodolfo Damaggio and Robert Campanella. Dixon says, "Two Predators show up in Gotham during an incredible heatwave. At the same time, ironically, Mr. Freeze is on a crime spree and runs afoul of the Predators." **$1.95**

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #12 (OF 13)

DC COMICS/DARK HORSE Gotham City District Attorney Harvey Dent has vanished and it's up to Batman to find him. A partial list of suspects in Dent's disappearance might include men, women, children, space aliens, bacteria, other lawyers, politicians, the unborn, the deceased, clones and those elves responsible for "Heroes Reborn." Meanwhile, the serial killer Holiday continues to off the associates of mob boss Sal Maroni. By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. **$2.95**

BLOODY MARY: LADY LIBERTY #3 (OF 4)

HELIX/DC COMICS New York is being held hostage by the evil Reverend Achilles Seagal and his followers. The city's only hope lays with assassin Bloody Mary and her demented partner Major. Here, Mary and Major confront Seagal, but might not live through the experience, especially if the twisted food connoisseur The Vatman has anything to say about it. By Garth Ennis and Carlos Ezquerra. **$2.50**

BONE #29

CARTOON BOOKS It's a dark day for the scheming Phoney Bone, as he's finally made to pay for trying to slay The Red Dragon. Also, when the Bone cousins (Fone, Smiley and Phoney) meet up with Rock Jaw, the Master of the Eastern Border, their only chance at resuce lays with three small, but familiar friends. By Jeff Smith. **$2.95**

CASTLE WAITING #3

OLIO Ever wonder what happens to the characters in fairy tales after they "lived happily ever after"? Well, something happens to them when their stories end, and that's the basic premise of this series. Here, Lady Jain goes exploring in a medieval castle, finding all sorts of surprises, most of them involving centuries-old chamber pots with centuries-old poop in them. By Linda Medley. **$2.95**

THE FLASH SECRET FILES #1

DC COMICS In this special double-sized issue, the origins of the three Flashes (Wally West, Barry Allen and Jay Garrick) are retold with never-before-revealed details. We also get a glimpse into the pre-Kid-Flash existence of Wally West and a whole bunch of secrets that could possibly get a reader killed. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Paul Ryan, Craig Rousseau, Humberto Ramos and others. **$4.95**

GREEN LANTERN #92

DC COMICS Green Lantern and Green Arrow are young, hip and superheroic. But are they men enough to stop a major riot in New York City? We'd have to say no and advise everyone in DC's NYC to move to the country, where comic writers rarely set riots. This story continues the three-part tale begun in *Green Arrow* #125 and concludes in *Green Arrow* #126. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks and Terry Austin. **$1.75**

HITMAN #20

DC COMICS "Ace of Killers," Part 6 (of 6). Hitman and his friends (Natt, Tiegel and Etrigan the Demon) have recovered that mystical gun called the Ace of Winchesters. It's a good thing too because the Ace is the only thing that can kill the demonic Mawzir. But before the weapon's used, Etrigan double-crosses Hitman and the heroes' fragile alliance goes the way of the Dodo. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**

READ THIS BOOK!

THE FLASH #130-#131

DC COMICS It's Double Flash fun! First up, *The Flash* #130 sees Wally West (The Flash) take on a super-deadly new foe named The Suit, who manages to cripple the Flash in battle. In *The Flash* #131, also on sale this month, Wally's laid up in a wheelchair with a broken leg. But besides creating an all-new costume for himself, he manages to enlist the help of other super-speedsters to keep the peace in Keystone City. Unfortunately, the evil Suit learns our hero is wounded and decides to take advantage of the situation by killing him. By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. Says that wacky Morrison, "It's the first new costume for the Flash in however many years. The costume is actually condensed Speed Force itself which allows him to travel faster than ever before and it can do all kinds of new things. Flash creates this costume basically to hold himself up. It's made of pure speed force and he condenses it down into a solid costume so it kind of holds his body together and allows him to fight again." **$1.75**

JLA #12

DC COMICS "Rock of Ages," Part 3 (of 6). JLAers The Flash, Aquaman and Green Lantern travel through space to hunt for a mysterious rock called the Philosopher's Stone. When they return from their quest, they find all of Europe's been transformed into a firepit and the French are still rude. Oh yeah, Green Arrow betrays the JLA to Lex Luthor and the Joker. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.95**

KA-ZAR #7

MARVEL Alone and outnumbered in NYC, Ka-Zar's wife Shanna the She-Devil must scrap with troops sent to kill her by her evil brother-in-law Parnival Plunder. Shanna's gonna have to use all her skill and wits to beat the troops. Of course, creating a stampede by freeing all the animals in the Bronx Zoo can't hurt either. By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang. **$1.99**

MAGE: THE HERO DEFINED #3

IMAGE Kevin Matchstick, the man with the magical baseball bat, and his friends Coyote and Joe Phat are joined by Kirby Hero on their search to find the Second Mage. With their quest in question, the men turn to the witch Isis for direction. And as the heroes try to find their way, the evil Pale Incanter bides his time, waiting to strike. By Matt Wagner with Jeromy Cox. **$2.50**

READ THIS BOOK!

SIN CITY: FAMILY VALUES

LEGEND/DARK HORSE There's a mystery afoot in Sin City. Seems Dwight (the private eye with the reconstructed face) and Miho (the sexy yet deadly female ninja) are taking on the mob. Why they're doing it is anybody's guess. Look for plenty o' bloodshed and Miho on rollerblades! By Frank Miller who says, "If I told you why [they're taking on organized crime], I'd be doing what no mystery writer should ever do. The story is about the ninja Miho, involved in a real knock-down drag out battle with the Mafia. It's a story I'm very proud of; I think the artwork is great. If anything, what I'd point out that makes it special is that it's the longest single comic book [126 pages] I've ever done, and the longest anybody has done in quite a while, as far as I can tell. "I'm trying to break down some walls here. I think it's time that we all stopped moping and worrying so much and started having a great time." **MR $10**

RAGMOP #1

ROBIN #47

MAJOR BUMMER #4

DC COMICS Alien germs begin mutating into thousands of giant worms, eating everything in their path. There's only one man who can stop them—the mega-powerful Louis Martin. That is, if he can turn off the TV for a few minutes and get his butt off the couch. By John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Tom Ngyuen. **$2.50**

POISON ELVES #27

SIRIUS Our main man...er, elf Lusipher comes closer to meeting Jace (the narrator of our tale), as their careers as assassin and lawman come into conflict. Also, Guild leaders Talon and Malachi take action against Lusipher, who was thrown out of their haven Sanctuary last issue. By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

PREACHER #31

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Arseface tries exactin' revenge on Jesse Custer for the death of his dad, but he might have to get in line behind the fiendish Les Enfants Du Sang. Seems Jesse's on everybody's hit list! Meanwhile, Jesse discovers some interesting tidbits about his power to make people do his bidding. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #8

ACCLAIM COMICS Uh-oh. A terrorist group is attempting to blow up the Mid-Town Tunnel. Superheroes Quantum and Woody would stop them, except something's eaten Woody's boot. To save the day, Quantum has to partner with Warrant, the man once suspected of killing both Quantum and Woody's fathers. By Christopher Priest, M.D. Bright and Greg Adams. Priest says, "Two men, a goat and a tunnel full of terrorists—you can't really ask for more than that. This is a really cool issue. I can't tell you why without messing it up, but don't miss it." **$2.50**

RAGMOP #1

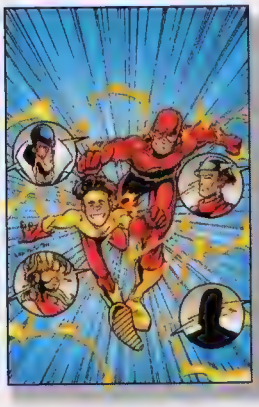
IMAGE Alice Hawkings (from the first *Ragmop* series) returns to Earth and is taken prisoner by a twisted psychiatrist named Lifton Freedman. Freedman likes to give his patients transorbital lobotomies and he's eager to work his magic on Alice. By Rob Walton. By Rob Walton who says, "Besides providing the most outrageous comedy in comics, *Ragmop* will also answer the riddles of the origins of the universe, where UFOs come from and what *really* happened in the Garden of Eden." Uhhh-huh. **$2.95**

RED ROCKET 7 #2 (OF 7)

DARK HORSE Rock 'n' roll star Red Rocket 7 (who happens to be a clone of an alien) is missing, and intrepid reporter Lynn is out to solve the mystery. In doing so, she uncovers the truth about the original Red Rocket and finds more trouble than you can shake an alien clone at. By Mike Allred. **$3.95**

ROBIN #47

DC COMICS The Boy Wonder heads overseas where the people are rude, diseases run rampant and you wouldn't believe what they do to pizza. Anyway, Robin's searching for his foe, The General. Seems the nutty guy's been put in charge of the armed forces for a country ruled by a 12-year-old boy. Smells like trouble. And Oxy 10. By Chuck Dixon, Eduardo Barreto and Bob Smith. **$1.95**



SPEED FORCE #1

STARCHILD: MYTHOPOLIS #1

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #56

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "The Crone," Part 4 (of 4). Someone's been killing off people who work for radio station RBC and the Golden Age Sandman is really stumped as to the killer's identity. To solve the mystery, he may have to offer his alter ego Wesley Dodds as bait. By Steven T. Seagle, Matt Wagner and Guy Davis. **MR $2.50**

SPEED FORCE #1

DC COMICS DC's hottest creators join forces to tell tales of the speedsters in the DC Universe. Barry Allen (the Golden Age Flash) teams up with Wally West (then-Kid Flash) to fight a never-before-seen baddie, Cobalt Blue. Plus Max Mercury helps exploited children at the turn of the century, and Jesse Quick uses her super-speed to run a multinational corporation. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, John Byrne, William Messner-Loebs, Jim Aparo, Phil Jimenez and others. Waid says, "Brian Augustyn and I are doing kind of bookend stories. We're doing a Barry Allen story featuring Kid Flash, and then we're doing a story about a far-future Flash. In those stories, we're introducing a brand-new villain called Cobalt Blue, who'll turn out to have a very important role in the Flash's history now and over the next thousand years." **$3.95**

STARCHILD: MYTHOPOLIS #1

IMAGE The Starchild (and funky storyteller) Anders Higgins and his sidekick Sigfried travel to the world-city of Brigadoon to find Higgins' father Homer. There, the duo gets its first taste of life in the big city, meeting Max the Toy Maker and running into the Grey Men, a shadowy bunch who are out to destroy all tales by burning books, erasing stories and killing storytellers. By James Owen. **$2.95**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #9

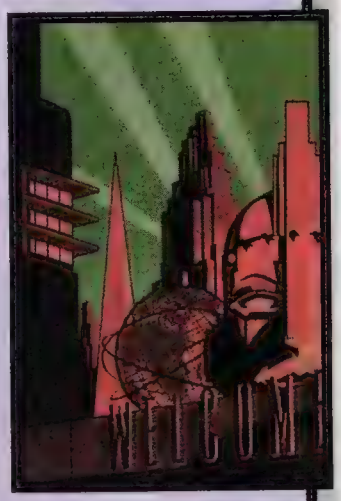
ABSTRACT STUDIO Things look bleak for Katchoo and Francine as the evil Darcy Parker seeks to make their lives more unbearable than a Hanson concert. Separated by 1,600 miles, the women are unable to help each other, and things go from bad to worse when Katchoo's friend David reveals his true intentions. By Terry Moore. **$2.75**

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Origins of Marvel Comics (Marvel)
Ever wondered how the Fantastic Four got their powers or what Dr. Strange did before becoming the master of magic? Marvel is reprinting its greatest origin stories in one nifty 256-page package. Included in this book are the origins of Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, Hulk, Dr. Strange and Thor, as well as additional contemporary stories about each of the heroes. By Stan Lee and others. **$24.99**

Terminal City ▶
(Vertigo/DC Comics)
In the future, Terminal City stands as a shining beacon of hope. As the centerpiece to The Brave New World's Fair, Terminal City is a near-utopia of technological masterpieces. But strange things are afoot and daredevil Cosmo Quinn and a weird bunch of misfits must figure out what's going on. This book reprints the funky nine-issue miniseries. By Dean Motter and Michael Lark. **$19.95**



Cerebus: Guys (Aardvark-Vanaheim)
That wacky barbarian aardvark is back in a trade paperback reprinting the "Guys" storyline from *Cerebus* #201-#219. In this volume, Cerebus travels to a bar where he meets the usual group of wackos: Prince Mick, Mrs. Thatcher, Harrison Starkey, Alec, Marty and more. By Dave Sim and Gerhard. **30 HARD-EARNED BUCKAROOS**

Kane Book 3: Histories (Dancing Elephant Press)
After a botched assassination attempt fails to kill New Eden's crime lord Oscar Darke, Detective Kane is put in charge of the investigation to find the would-be killer. He's got to find the culprit before the streets erupt in gangland warfare. *Histories* reprints *Kane* #9-#12 in a 136-page book. By Paul Grist. **$12.50**

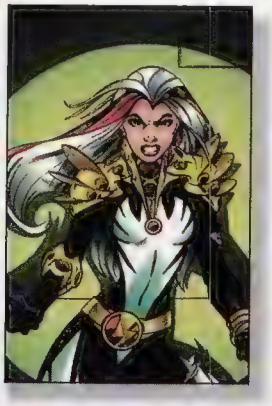
TERMINAL CITY: AERIAL GRAFFITI #1 (OF 5)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Curses! There's a disgruntled ex-skywriter flying over Terminal City, writing profanities in the sky. Now the police are turning to Cosmo Quinn, "Human Fly" and window washer to bring the foul-mouthed flier to justice. Quinn's gonna have to stop the skywriter before his antics ruin the city's greatest moment—the opening of a tunnel connecting Terminal City to Paris. By Dean Motter and Michael Lark. **$2.50**

THE TICK: BIG BLUE DESTINY #1

NEW ENGLAND COMICS America's keenest big blue superhero the Tick and his moth-costumed partner Arthur visit an art museum where they meet the evil Impressionist, a villain who can turn himself into any piece of art he sees. Now, the Tick's unable to hit the Impressionist for fear of breaking the fine art around him. What's a senselessly violent, overly muscular and underly intelligent superchap to do? By Eli Stone. **$2.95**—REGULAR; **$4.95**—SPECIAL

TERMINAL CITY: AERIAL GRAFFITI #1



THUNDERBOLTS #8

THUNDERBOLTS #8

MARVEL Marvel's baddest superheroes the Thunderbolts (who're really the Masters of Evil in disguise) are trapped within the headquarters of their mortal enemies, the Elements of Doom. The 'Bolts leader Citizen V is nowhere to be found, and Songbird's gonna have to rescue the whole team. Zounds! By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell. **$1.99**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #6

DC COMICS The Lovers (c'mon, ya gotta love that nickname) go back to the playground to beat the royal jelly outta the Rat Pack, a group of superhuman scum who are shaking down schools for money. Why would a superhuman criminal group want to rob children of their lunch money instead of, say, robbing banks or knockin' off jewelry stores? Sounds like the Rat Pack's got the collective intelligence of tree bark. By Dan Raspler, Sergio Cariello and Keith Champagne. **$1.75** W

Also shipping in SEPTEMBER

Ash: Cinder and Smoke #5 (Event)
War erupts between the mob and Russian developers as everyone believes Ash to be deader than a pork sandwich. **$2.95**

Avengers #13 (Marvel)
When a rift in the Negative Zone merges the "Heroes Reborn" Universe with the WildStorm Universe, the FF and StormWatch merge. **$1.99**

Batman Books (DC Comics)
The Penguin returns to crime in *Batman* #548, while Batman and Martian Manhunter hunt for a hardened fugitive in *Detective Comics* #715. **$1.95** each

Captain America #13 (Marvel)
Concluding the Marvel/WildStorm Universe merging, Captain America joins with Deathblow. **$1.99**

The Darkness #8 (Image)
Jackie Estacado seeks vengeance on the yahoos who tried killin' Don Franchetti, and his antics attract Witchblade. **$2.50**

Deadpool #10 (Marvel)
Deadpool takes his roommate/prisoner Blind Alfred to the aquarium and meets the Great Lakes Avengers. **$1.99**

Divine Right: The Adventures of Max Faraday #1 (Image)
When teenager Max Faraday downloads a mysterious document, government agents and bloodthirsty demons start hunting him down. **$2.50**—Regular; **$3.50**—Special

Fantastic Four #13 (Marvel)
Beginning the Marvel/WildStorm Universe joining, the Fantastic Four merge with the WildC.A.T.s. **$1.99**

Gambit #3 (Marvel)
Gambit seeks sanctuary from the forces of darkness in the Vatican itself. **$2.50**

Gen^{13} #23 (Image)
The Gen^{13} kids travel to the future, landing smack in the middle of a planet-wide power-struggle **$2.50**

Iron Man #13 (Marvel)
Continuing the Marvel/WildStorm convergence, Iron Man fuses with WetWorks. **$1.99**

Pitt #15 (Full Bleed)
Pitt meets an energy creature and has frightening visions of his future. **$2.50**

Spawn #66 (Image)
The secrets of Spawn's attraction to Spawn alley are revealed. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
Spider-Man tangles with the original Dr. Octopus in *Amazing Spider-Man* #428, and with the Friends of Humanity in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #85. *Sensational Spider-Man* #21 sees Spidey sucked into a magical web by a supernatural force, and in *Spectacular Spider-Man* #251, Kraven the Hunter returns from the dead. *Marvel Team-Up* #3 sees Spidey joins up with Silver Sable and Sandman on a lethal assignment. **$1.99** each

Star Wars Books (Dark Horse)
The evil Empire attempts to recover a fleet of 200 heavy cruisers in *Star Wars: Dark Force Rising* #5, while C-3PO and R2-D2 find adventure in a story set years before "Star Wars" in *Star Wars: The Protocol Offensive*. The Sith Empire wins a battle against the Old Republic in *Star Wars: Tales of The Jedi—The Fall of the Sith Empire* #4, and an Imperial General seeks to save his worthless hide when the Rebel starfighters attack in *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron—In the Empire's Service* #2. $2.95 each; *The Protocol Offensive* —**$4.95**

Superman Books (DC Comics)
In *Action Comics* #715, Superman is imprisoned in an escape-proof trap. People start disappearing in Metropolis and the Big S battles Parasite in *Adventures of Superman* #552. The Revenge Squad's leader sends a bunch of Parademons to attack Lex Luthor and the Outsiders in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #73. And wrapping up your super fun, Superman battles a secretive bad guy in *Superman* #129. **$1.95** each

Uncanny X-Men #349 (Marvel)
The new mutant Maggot comes to New York where tussles with Archangel and Psylocke. **$1.99**

Wolverine #118 (Marvel)
After "Operation: Zero Tolerance," Wolvie's gotta hold the X-Men and himself together. **$1.99**

X-Men #69 (Marvel)
Bastion's "Operation: Zero Tolerance" makes a final, all-out assault on the X-Men and mutantkind. **$1.99** ●

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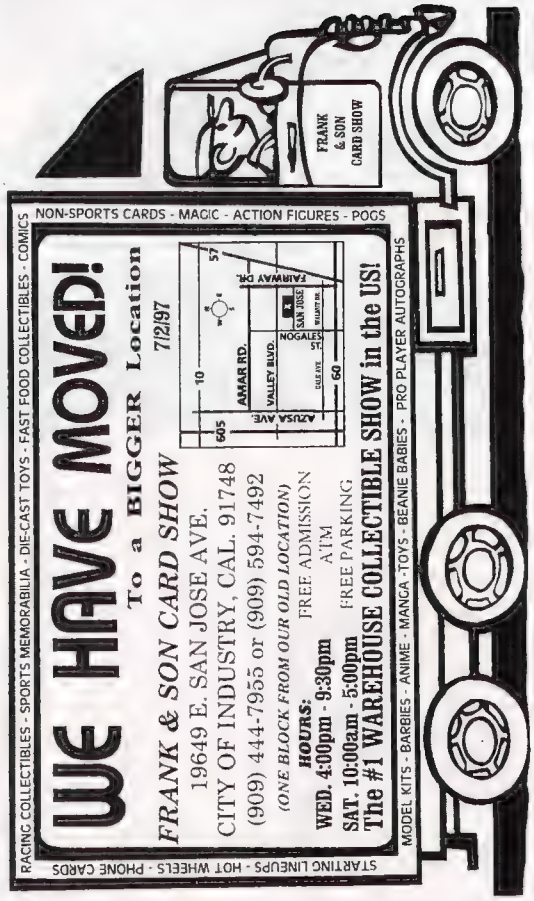
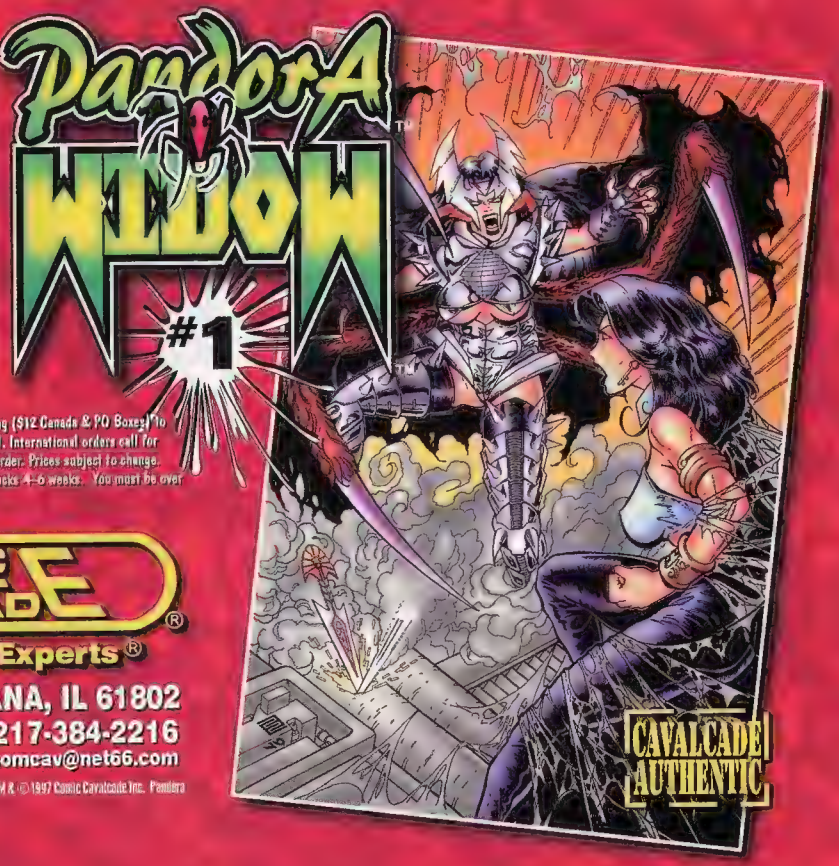


THE HOTTEST INDEPENDENT CROSSOVER OF THE YEAR!

Avatar's Alluring Arachnid faces down the Girl of Myth with major consequences for both of them! Awesome art by Mike Wolfer! Available in these cool versions:

- Pandora/Widow #1 Commemorative Ltd. to 1000. $5.
- Pandora/Widow #1 Commemorative Signed by Christensen, Seifert, & Wolfer. Ltd. to 250. $15.
- Pandora/Widow #1 RED LEATHER With gold foil stamped artwork by Wolfer. Ltd. to 700. $25.



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The "Kabuki Art School"

Hey, Wizardites—just in case you haven't heard the buzz, David Mack's *Kabuki* has made the jump to Image! But there's just one little problem, amigos!

CONTEST!

The conundrum in a nutshell:

Dave's a perfectionist. No matter how beautiful his artwork, he always thinks it could be better. See, look—sad, disappointed Dave.

So to brighten Dave's mood, he'd like you to help out with his art chores! Yep, you heard us correctly—*help Dave out*. See that big ol' *image* of Dave's first Image Comics' *Kabuki* cover to the left? Well, we want you to cut it out and do *something* artistic with it! Add family photos to it. Draw in a Christmas tree and Santa. Make it into collage. We don't care! Just help Dave out by being artistic! That way, he'll be a happy, smiley Dave.

See, look—happy, smiley Dave.

SAD DAVE

HAPPY DAVE

The most original and creative entries will win these fantastic Kabuki prizes:

Grand Prize (1): One lucky Grand Prize winner will receive an original piece of artwork signed by David Mack, a complete set of *Kabuki* comic books signed by Mack and a nifty-dinsky *Kabuki* T-shirt!

First Prize (1): One winner will receive a complete set of *Kabuki* comic books signed by Mack and a super-duper *Kabuki* T-shirt

Second Prize (100): Ten Second Prize winners will receive a handy-dandy *Kabuki* T-shirt.

This month's contest is sponsored by David Mack, champion of justice and all-around good guy.

Fill this out, attach your art to the entry form and put it in an envelope. Send to: Kabuki Art Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is October 31, 1997.

Legal Stuff

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Image Comics, their immediate families and...um, well, that's it. Everybody else can enter. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Kabuki Art School Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. "Wookiee" is pretty much the only thing that rhymes with "Kabuki." All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by October 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on or about November 14, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after November 14, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Kabuki Art School Winners List, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Kabuki Art School Entry Form

DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

MORE SCREEN TIME FOR SPAWN?

By Rob Allstetter

Will **"Spawn"** spawn a sequel? If Clint Goldman, producer of the live-action film from New Line Cinema has his way, there will be one.

"It's going to happen. We are going to have a sequel," Goldman said. "We haven't had any time to talk about it, but we'll sit down, hire a writer and talk about what it's going to be about."

Prior to its Aug. 1 release, Goldman said he was confident "Spawn" would do well enough at the box office to merit a sequel.

"I'd be surprised if the picture didn't do $100 million," Goldman said. "I was originally thinking $70 million, but I can't see people not going to see this thing in droves. I'm saying this because I've seen the film with an audience. 'Men in Black' was fun, but, at the end, people weren't cheering. At the end of 'Spawn,' there was a hellacious cheer."

Michael Jai White, who played Spawn, and **John Leguizamo**, who played Clown, have both indicated they would be interested in a sequel.

"I had a great time, and I wasn't sure I was going to with all the plastic on my face all the time," Leguizamo said. "It ended up being this really weird trip, but I had a great time. I enjoyed working with Mike, so I would do it again."

"As long as they want to come back, I hope to have them back so we have some consistency to these movies," said Todd McFarlane, Spawn's creator and executive producer of the film.

McFarlane said "Spawn" was originally rated R, but after five attempts to change the rating, some trims of violence and Clown's *double-entendres* enabled the film to get a PG-13. McFarlane said the edited material will return in a director's cut version for home video, and that an R-rated version might be shown internationally.

Does "Spawn" have what it takes to spawn a sequel?

On the "Spawn" animation front, Catherine Winder of HBO Animation said the cable network has ordered scripts for 12 new episodes. And, although these episodes haven't been green-lighted for production yet, they are almost a certainty to be made, given the strong ratings of the first six episodes. Larry Brody, who developed the "Silver Surfer" series for Fox, worked on some of the early scripts for a second season, but has since left the project.

"We'll be picking up the storyline, but the series will be more episodic in nature," said Supervising Director Eric Radomski.

"SubZero" may hit theaters, instead of Blockbuster.

ANIMATED BATMAN MIGHT RETURN TO THEATERS

The next Batman movie to fly into theaters might be animated.

Randy Rogel, who produced and wrote the **"Batman: SubZero"** movie with Boyd Kirkland, said that reaction was strong enough from executives at Warner Bros. to possibly merit a limited theatrical release, similar to "Batman: Mask of the Phantasm."

The film will be based in the continuity and contain the designs from the original "Batman" series on Fox. Mr. Freeze is the villain, and elements from the animated movie will be incorporated into the continuity of the new-look "Batman" series on Kids' WB! this season.

"SubZero" was originally planned for a home-video release to coincide with "Batman & Robin," but has been pushed back to an unannounced date this winter.

The movie features the most extensive use on a Batman project of computer-generated images mixed with traditional animation.

"We had a screening of the movie on the lot for Warner Bros. animation employees and certain invited guests, and overall the feedback was that they were pretty happy with how the two [formats] blended," said Kirkland.

'VOYAGER' GETS A NEW CHARACTER

Jeri Ryan, who starred in NBC's "Dark Skies," has joined the cast of **"Star Trek: Voyager"** for its fourth season on UPN. She will play Seven of Nine, a member of the Borg.

"Seven of Nine is something of a wild child—she was a human assimilated by the Borg as a young girl," said Executive Producer Rick Berman. "But once Captain Janeway severs her connection to the Collective, she is forced to stay on *Voyager* and adapt to human society. Seven of Nine should provide us with countless new storylines."

The character first appears in the season premiere, "Scorpion, Part II." Once freed from the Borg, she takes on a more human appearance, revealing a sensual creature who is neither fully Borg, nor fully human. The unpredictable new series regular will prove a challenge to the ship's crew, as they slowly help her rediscover humanity.

On "Dark Skies," Ryan played Juliet, a mysterious government agent with foreign ties who helped in the secret war against hostile extraterrestrials.

MIGHTY MARVEL UPDATE

Alfred Hitchcock has nothing on Marvel Comics Publisher **Stan Lee**. Look for Lee to make cameo appearances in Marvel's upcoming live-action projects that he is executive producing. Although his schedule didn't allow him to play a policeman as planned in "Blade," Lee recently was in Vancouver to play a S.H.I.E.L.D. communications officer in the "Nick Fury" telefilm for Fox.

"I love it. To me, acting is the most fun in the world," said Lee, who was a juror in 1989's "The Trial of the Incredible Hulk" telefilm and was featured in live-action wraparounds on the "Marvel Action Universe" animated series.

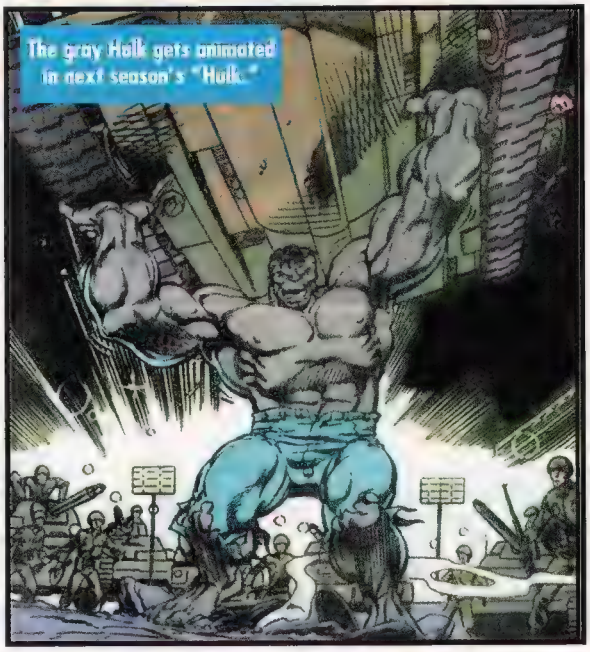
"He really is Spider-Man," joked "Fury" star David Hasselhoff of Lee's time on the set. "He kept flying up and down the stairs. I kept having to tell him, 'No, you cannot play Nick Fury.'"...The second season of **"The Incredible Hulk"** animated series will kick off with an episode called "A Hulk of a Different Color," which introduces the gray Hulk into the series and has the Leader kidnap Bruce Banner to force him to restore the Leader's lost super-intelligence. Following that is an episode called "Down Memory Lane," in which She-Hulk, despite slowly losing her gamma-spawned strength, attends her high-school reunion....Comics writer **J.M. DeMatteis** (*The Spectacular Spider-Man*) has been brought in to work on the **"Daredevil"** movie script....Voices for the **"Silver Surfer"** animated series will be recorded in Toronto with Canadian performers, similar to "X-Men."

MEN IN BLACK RULE THE SUMMER

"Men in Black" appears on course to be the box-office champion for the summer. The film, starring **Tommy Lee Jones** and **Will Smith** and based on Lowell Cunningham's comic books, was tops at the box office in its first three weeks of release and had grossed more than $172 million at press time.

"Men in Black"—whose soundtrack album also hit #1—was expected to overtake "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" and finish with a take in the $250 million range.

Meanwhile, "**Batman & Robin**" slumped 61 percent after its opening weekend and only topped the $100 million mark after five weeks of release. Such a decline began speculation that there might not be a fifth installment in the series, but overseas box office of "Batman & Robin" will likely exceed its Bat-predecessors. "Batman & Robin" was expected to do $120 million domestically.


The gray Hulk gets animated in next season's "Hulk."

NIGHTMAN ON THE SYNDICATED HORIZON

NightMan seems to be the right man for **Matt McColm**'s career.

McColm, a longtime stuntman, model and actor, is getting his first lead in "NightMan," a live-action, syndicated television series based on the Marvel Comics character who was introduced as part of Malibu Comics' Ultraverse line.

"I met [McColm] when he was [stunt] doubling **David Hasselhoff** on "Knight Rider.' In fact, he's doubled most of the action/adventure characters in the movies," said Glen Larson, the series' executive producer.

The two-hour premiere for "NightMan" is scheduled to air within a two-week window beginning Sept. 19. Hour-long episodes then begin the week of Oct. 6, with 22 planned for the first season. More than 160 stations, covering more than 90 percent of the country, are carrying "NightMan."

McColm stars as Johnny Dominoe, a saxophonist at the House of Soul nightclub in Bay City at the beginning of the 21st century. Johnny is struck by lightning in a freak cable-car accident, which endows him with "abnormal parapsychological abilities"—he can sense the thoughts of others when they are focused on wrongdoing. In the opener, he is caught between forces competing for control of top-secret, high-tech weapons.

Ironically, Hasselhoff, who is playing Nick Fury in a Fox telefilm (see "Special Report"), has a part in the opener.

"I did it as a favor to Glen Larson," said Hasselhoff. "Without Glen, there would have been no 'Knight Rider.' Without 'Knight Rider,' there wouldn't have been a 'Baywatch.' So, I owe my career to Glen Larson."

ZOMBIE STEERS THE CROW

Rob Zombie, front man for the band White Zombie, has written a script and will direct the third **"The Crow"** live-action film from Pressman Films. Sources report the movie will have a budget less than "The Crow" and "The Crow: City of Angels," and plans are to begin production by the end of the year for a 1998 release. There was no casting at press time.

Meanwhile, James O'Barr, creator of the dark character, is writing a treatment for a fourth film.

'BLACK CROSS' ON HOLD

"Black Cross" has been crossed out as a movie—at least temporarily. The Touchtone Pictures film, which was to begin production last spring with ex-football player **Howie Long** starring, has been put in turnaround, effectively starting the preproduction process over.

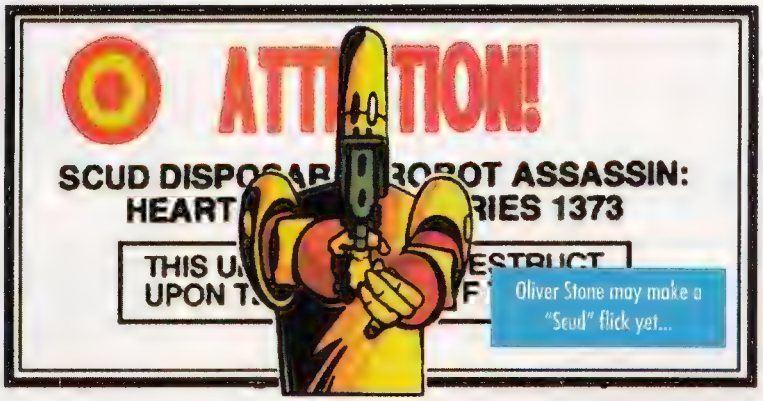
"It was a matter of not being able to get a script the producer [Lawrence Gordon] felt comfortable with in time," said Chris Warner, the creator of *Black Cross*, who wrote the first two drafts of the script with Steve Perry.

Warner noted "**The Mask**" and the upcoming "Virus" were both placed in turnaround at one point before being made. "[The producers] still want to make 'Black Cross,'" said Warner. "They've invested a lot of time and energy into it."

SHORT TAKES

Rob Schrab, creator of ***Scud: The Disposable Assassin***, said he has renewed the option on the character for another year with Oliver Stone's Illusion Entertainment, in the hopes of making a movie. "It's a process that can last anywhere from three weeks to five years," he said. "I would hate to be grounded in pre-production hell for 10 years."...The **"Lost in Space"** movie from New Line Cinema is scheduled for an April 3, 1998 release. The film stars Gary Oldham, William Hurt, Mimi Rogers, Matt LeBlanc, Jack Johnson and Heather Graham....The straight-to-video **"Gen13"** animated movie has been delayed—again. "It's about 60 percent done," said WildStorm Productions' Jim Lee. "Hopefully, it will come out early next year." Producer/writer/director Kevin Altieri showed a brief preview of "Gen13" at the San Diego Comic Con and said that orchestral music for the film will be produced in Israel....Super-news: Production on the next Superman movie, starring **Nicolas Cage** and to be directed by Tim Burton, is now expected to begin in January. The Warner Bros. film is targeted for a Christmas 1998 release. **Gilbert Gottfried** is doing the voice of Mr. Mxyzptlk in an upcoming episode of the "Superman" animated series. **Christopher Reeve**'s directorial debut, the AIDS-focused HBO movie "In the Gloaming," was nominated for an Emmy award....The **"Men in Black"** animated series begins on Kids' WB! on Oct. 11. The series will air at 8:30 a.m. (ET) and be followed in a two-hour action block by "The New Batman/Superman Adventures" at 9 a.m. and "The Legend of Calamity Jane" at 10 a.m....The **"Conan"** live-action television series begins in syndication the week of Sept. 22. Ralf Moeller stars in the title role of the one-hour series, which is being shot in Mexico....An animated series based on Peter Bagge's ***Hate*** is in production and will begin this winter on MTV....The animated **"Zorro"** TV series begins in syndication the week of Sept. 20....Comedic actor **Martin Mull** ("Roseanne") joins the cast of ABC's "**Sabrina, the Teenage Witch**" this fall....An animated series based on Harris Comics' ***Cyberfrog*** is in the early stages of development....Comics writer **John Rozum** (*Xombi, The X-Files*) is a writer for the first season of the television series, "Team Knight Rider."...**"Street Fighter,"** a live-action movie based on the video game, and **"Waterworld,"** the big-budget film starring Kevin Costner and adapted into an Acclaim comic, will have their network premieres on ABC this season....The USA Network has canceled **"Duckman."** W

Rob Allstetter almost became Howie Long's stunt double for "Black Cross." He's now available at half-scale.



Celebrity Profile CYNTHIA ROTHROCK

Paul Schiraldi

If you have cable television, you'll likely recognize Cynthia Rothrock. She's the blonde martial-arts dynamo kicking her heels up in many made-for-cable action flicks.

Rothrock is also starring in her own new comic book, *Cynthia Rothrock: Cyn*, which will begin in January from Draculina Publishing, and has two more movies in the upcoming months, "Sworn to Justice" and "Night Vision." *Wizard* caught up to Rothrock at the Chicago ComiCon on the July 4th weekend as she mixed autographs with con chatter.

Reading comics: "When I was younger, I read them. I liked *Mad* magazine and I used to read the Archie comics...and Batman and Superman."

Today's comics: "They're amazing. They blow the old ones away, with characters like Spawn. The artwork and the color are really great. They make me want to go out and get all the new comics and read them."

New *Cyn* comic: "It's fiction, but it's based on myself, my abilities. I'll get input into the fighting. It's like doing a movie on paper.

"I did the cover to *Draculina* and the publisher said, 'You ever thought about doing a comic?' I said, 'Let's do one.' We're in the beginning stages. We have the storyline, but we're looking for submissions from up-and-coming artists."

"Sworn to Justice": "It's the first martial-arts film to be accepted in the film festivals. It came out a lot better than I thought, especially with a lower budget. I play an expert defense witness in a murder trial. I'm a psychologist who has ESP visions."

"Night Vision": "It's with Fred Williamson and his own company. I play a cop, his partner. We're after a serial killer who preys on young Catholic girls who are having affairs with married men."

Playing a comic character in the movies: "I would love to do that. That's on the top of my list. Anybody got a character out there? I've always wanted to do that—or be on a TV series. It's getting kind of tired playing cops all the time."

Martial-arts films: "They're getting bigger now that Jackie Chan has broken through. Action stars are now getting the Hong Kong directors. They can't compete with Jackie Chan, so they get the directors to make them look good." ■ *RA*

For more "Trailer Park," see our Special Report on the next page.

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SPECIAL REPORT: AIMING WITH 'FURY'

David Hasselhoff takes his shot at making 'Nick Fury' Marvel's new franchise hero

By Rob Allstetter

A long way from the California beaches where "Baywatch" is shot, David Hasselhoff still has a sunny disposition. He playfully ambles about the gray-walled set, a three-tier war room, whistling and singing the Bobby McFerrin tune, "Don't Worry, Be Happy."

But then it's time to shoot the scene, and Hasselhoff drops the eye patch that was resting on his forehead. Forget Hasselhoff's Mitch Buchanan, the clean-cut lifeguard who saves the occasional swimmer from drowning on "Baywatch." This is Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., a guy who routinely saves the world.

Dressed in black leather from head to booted foot, the 6-foot-4-inch Hasselhoff wears Fury's five o'clock shadow on his tanned and smudged face. As the scene commences, he's being chastised by Pincer, the anal-retentive S.H.I.E.L.D. director, when suddenly Hasselhoff's Fury pulls out his Wetherby pistol and fires at him…

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! We're not going to give away the surprise twist, but after the gunfire, the camera zooms in on Hasselhoff's face, reflecting a steely resolve. This definitely is no day at the beach; this is the high-tech adventure of "Nick Fury," a made-for-television movie tentatively set to air in January or February on Fox.

Near the end of a six-week shoot, Hasselhoff remains energized as he brings one of Marvel Comics' most venerable characters to the screen in an earnest, faithful rendering.

"He's the last of the great American heroes. He's John Wayne, Sean Connery and Kirk Douglas," says Hasselhoff off the set, which is located inside the Portman Generator Plant in Surrey, British Columbia; about a 20-minute drive from Vancouver.

"This is a darker Nick Fury than what the comic books [present]. You're walking a fine line to becoming the old 'Batman' series—y'know, 'Powee!' and 'Zap!' We wanted to try and create something a little more adult.

"This is an adult hero. A lot of adults know who he is. When I mention to people on the street what I'm doing now, it's all the adults who know who he is. Our challenge now is to get the kids into who Nick Fury is."

Australian director Rod Hardy is into who Nick Fury is. Hardy, who recently helmed "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," says Hasselhoff has thrown himself into the role.

"David Hasselhoff *is* Nick Fury," Hardy says. "We've managed to get a look that, if you're a comic book fan, you're not going to be disappointed." He mentions that the only problem fans may have with Fury's look is his lack of gray strips of hair down the sides of his head: "I tried them and it just didn't work."

Hardy makes it clear that Hasselhoff's general appearance will make up for any minor problems. "I think people will be really surprised at the energy and the darkness of the character that David's picked up on," he notes, adding that the actor has a very strong face on screen.

Hasselhoff—whose work on the mid-'80s show "Knight Rider" introduced him to the world of action heroes—says he actually liked the gray look, but understands the reasons for forsaking it.

"The consensus was it looked a little too distinguished," he says. "We want the people to believe Fury, even though he is an over-the-top hero. We want the audience to suspend belief, but not to the point where they look at it and go, 'Oh, that's stupid.'"

"If you're a comic book fan, you won't be disappointed," says director Hardy of "Nick Fury," starring David Hasselhoff (above) and based on the Marvel hero (below).

So, the gray was out. But you bet the eye patch was in, even though Hasselhoff says it wasn't as easy to wear as you might think.

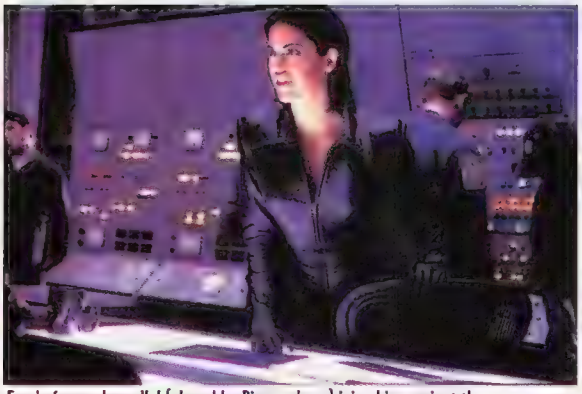
"We took a crew picture yesterday where everyone was wearing an eye patch, and people were coming up to me and telling me they have a newfound respect for me," Hasselhoff laughs. "I've been getting through it, hitting my mark and fighting without banging my head. But your depth perception is completely whacked out.

"But [the eye patch] helps you with the character, because you can kind of be in your own world," the actor says, noting that the patch helps imply that Fury is a loner, a very internal character.

"I don't think I could do it without the patch."

Hasselhoff didn't know who Fury was before this

project, but was hooked after reading the script by David Goyer ("Blade," "The Crow: City of Angels"), which has a retired Fury rejoining S.H.I.E.L.D. to thwart the plans of Viper, the daughter of his dead nemesis Baron Von Strucker. Not only does Viper (played by Sandra Hess) scheme to unleash the Death's Head Virus, but she has also poisoned Fury, who has less than a day to live and stop her.



Fury's former lover Val (played by Rinna, above) joins him against the megalomaniacal Viper (Hess, right), who plans to unleash a deadly virus.

Fury is aided in the mission by several other familiar S.H.I.E.L.D. agents, including his former love Val (Lisa Rinna of "Melrose Place"), Pierce (Neil Roberts), Dugan (Garry Chalk), Gabe Jones (Ron Canada) and Kate Neville (Tracy Waterhouse).

"I came aboard because of the script," Hasselhoff says. "Then I went out and got the comic books and really got jazzed. I liked the hardness and grittiness of the character."

The set, which prominently features the S.H.I.E.L.D. logos on computer monitors and on the walls, is part of the big-budget feel of "Nick Fury." It's one of the most expensive telefilms Fox has made, costing even more than Marvel's other Fox telefilm, "Generation X."

Hasselhoff notes that although there are a wealth of special effects, "The difference between this movie and a 'Batman' is you are not going to see monstrous, over-the-top, incredible stunts."

Part of the film's "real" feeling comes from Fury's interactions with the other agents. Hasselhoff says the performers bonded early on and a team spirit continued throughout the production.

"We sat around a table in the beginning and talked with each other about our characters," Hasselhoff says. "Why is Nick Fury sarcastic and why does he have an attitude toward Val? Dugan—what's his past with Fury?"

While Hasselhoff has resumed production of "Baywatch," ballyhooed as the world's most popular television series, there's probably more "Fury" in his future, too.

"They signed me up for five movies of the week," he says. "There are so many ways this could go, and I'm thinking of taking it to a different avenue. I'd love to see it graduate to feature films.

"I'm very excited about this. I believe in this character and the franchise." W

CHARACTER PROFILE:

Cable

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Nathan Christopher Charles Summers Dayspring Askani (just call him Nate)
AGE: Indeterminate due to his time traveling, appears to be in late 40s
HEIGHT: 6' 4"
WEIGHT: 225 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: White
EYE COLOR: Blue
FIRST APPEARANCE: *The Uncanny X-Men* #201 (as infant); *New Mutants* #87 (as Cable)
TITLE CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Cable*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Sugarman, Apocalypse, Bastion and Stryfe

ORIGIN

Born to Scott Summers and Madelyne Pryor (a clone of Jean Grey), young Nate Summers was infected with a techno-organic virus by Apocalypse. Unable to fight the virus as a young boy, Nate was taken 2,000 years into the future by a future sisterhood known as the Askani in order to cure him, and train him to defeat Apocalypse.

Thanks to the Askani technology, Scott and Jean Summers were pulled to the future after their wedding to raise Nate from infancy to adolescence. Just before their arrival, the Askani had created a clone of Nate, who was captured by Apocalypse, who thought he had the real Nathan Summers.

As Nate grew to be a teen, he learned to telekinetically control the techno-organic virus growing inside him, thanks to his parents' help. During his struggles, however, the virus destroyed his left arm and other portions of his body, which now appear robotic. Together with his parents, Nate launched an assault on Apocalypse and his clone, who now called himself Stryfe. The combined might of Nate and the others defeated both villains.

But Apocalypse eventually rose to power once again, and a much older and wiser Nate realized that the only way to stop the madman was to prevent his rise to power. His course of action decided upon, Nate was hurled into the past to save the future, a "cable" of hope connecting two time periods.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Nate, now calling himself Cable, came to our era over 30 years ago. He initially worked briefly with Prof. Charles Xavier and went underground for a time, working with such individuals and agencies as Nick Fury, S.H.I.E.L.D., Wolverine, Wild Pack, Six Pack and Canada's Department K on numerous covert operations. During this time, he apparently amassed a vast stockpile of firepower and other equipment for himself, including Graymalkin, an orbiting satellite he used as a staging center.

At some point during his covert operations, Cable presumably became frustrated with the progress of mutant-human relations, and decided to step in and take matters into his own hands. To this end, Cable usurped control of Xavier's newest mutant recruits, the New Mutants, and began training them as an elite strike force called X-Force. Through his association with X-Force, one aspect of Cable's mission was revealed: He was to protect the young mutant named Sam Guthrie, who would one day aid in the battle against Apocalypse.

With X-Force, Cable has had many battles with the likes of Stryfe, Apocalypse, the Mutant Liberation Front and Mr. Sinister. Perhaps Cable's greatest loss occurred when his adopted son Tyler betrayed him and assumed the role of Genesis, heir to Apocalypse. Genesis was apparently killed by Wolverine, and Cable still grieves over the loss.

In his actions with X-Force, Cable appears to have made more waves than he has smoothed between mutants and humans. Due to his abrupt, commanding style, he often rubs people the wrong way, making many enemies as he goes. Despite this, he has found a home with the X-Men, and has since revealed his identity to Scott and Jean Summers. Together, the three now share a unique family relationship.

Lately, Cable has become more reserved in his temperament, and less grim in his outlook. As a result, he has developed a blossoming romance with the X-Man, Storm, and the two try to spend as much free time together as possible. However, Cable can still make enemies, and has recently found one in the Hulk, when he tried on two occasions to enter the mind of the green behemoth, much to the Hulk's displeasure.

Seeking his own path, Cable has recently severed his ties with X-Force, left the X-Mansion, and headed out on his own, apparently seeking to complete his mission, the details of which he guards very closely. Whether or not he will succeed is yet to be seen.

Opposite: Cable with partner Domino (in back) and his currently deceased mentor Blaquesmith.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Cable #48 in September begins the "Hellfire Hunt," pitting Cable against the X-Men's old foes, the Hellfire Club's Inner Circle. Series writer James Robinson says that during the storyline, Cable will uncover a plot by the Hellfire Club to kill Apocalypse, forcing him into the uncomfortable position of protecting the man he was raised to destroy. Cable will also get a chronicler for the adventure, a gossip columnist named Irene Meriwether, who, thanks to unfortunate circumstances, gets stuck accompanying Cable as he travels the globe fighting the White Bishop and the Hellfire Club.

Also, look for plenty of guest shots by Marvel Universe characters including Paladin, Peregrine and the Black Panther.

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Always wanted to check Cable out, but just didn't know where to start? Try these blips on for size.

• ***Cable: Blood and Metal* #1-#2**—The prequel to his own series, *B&M* fills in a lot of the gaps in Cable's history, and redefines a bunch of his relationships with his teammates from his past operations. Cool story by Fabian Nicieza and super art by John Romita Jr.

• ***X-Force* #50**—Forced to battle all of X-Force, Cable realizes just how well he's trained his team, as they nearly whip his tuckus. This lays the groundwork for Cable's recent departure from the book.

• ***Cable* #20**—Just before "The Age of Apocalypse," Cable, along with his companion Domino and the rest of the X-Men, realize they're just about to die. Hidden feelings are revealed, and Cable actually shows a sensitive side!

• ***Cable* #45-#46**—As part of Operation: Zero Tolerance, Cable has to break into the X-Mansion, rescue Caliban, and make sure Bastion doesn't get any of the X-Men's secret stuff. Oh, did we mention a whole platoon of soldiers is in the way? Great fun and a killer story.

SIMILAR TASTES

If *Cable* sounds like something right up your alley, be sure to take a look at these other books with wild action sequences: *WildC.A.T.s*, *Daredevil*, and for a lighter touch on a gun-toting soldier-type, check out *Hitman*. W

North Carolina-based freelancer Matthew Brady was actually infected with the techno-organic virus as well. Instead of a robotic arm, however, he got a robotic ass.

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MANGA SCENE

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

By Carl Gustav Horn

Appleseed kicks off when Deunan (front) and Bri join the shady government of Olympus, which plans to rebuild a ravaged world in 2127.

A BETTER TOMORROW

When the world's in the toilet, the sci-fi epic 'Appleseed' poses the question, 'Who should rebuild it?'

The seed of the future is sown on withered ground, as Masamune Shirow's sci-fi epic *Appleseed* shows us humanity is responsible for picking up its own pieces in a post-war world.

Set in 2127, *Appleseed* begins with Earth recovering from more than a century of war and ecological disaster. Its two protagonists are well-equipped to be survivors: 23-year-old Deunan, a former member of the Los Angeles SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics) unit, and Briareos ("Bri"), a 32-year-old cyborg who is Deunan's longtime partner.

While scavenging in the ruins of a nerve-gassed city, Deunan encounters a young woman named Hitomi, who is working for Olympus, a super-technological city-state located on a large man-made island off the coast of Northwest Africa. Olympus' existence has been largely unknown because of the years of war, but now the city is reaching out to recruit people such as Deunan and Bri to join an effort to help the world recover—and, not incidentally, unite it under Olympus' mysterious "Appleseed Plan."

Deunan and Bri, although they naturally have suspicions about this utopian wonderland that's appeared seemingly from nowhere, find it a better deal than the wastelands and join the Olympus ESWAT ("E" for "Extra") unit. The *Appleseed* story unfolds from there, as both are promptly sucked into the internal and external power games surrounding Olympus. Shirow spins scenarios of terrorism, combat and intrigue as various factions within the city debate the wisdom of the plan to reshape human society, while the surviving old nations ask for Olympus' aid even as they seek to subvert, spy on, and steal from what is now the most advanced power on the planet.

"The one thing that really seems to jump out about *Appleseed* is the balance it strikes between the story's characters and the story's organizations, and even between the separate volumes of the story," says Dark Horse Comics Manga Editor Peet Janes. "And there are balances, too, between science and nature, between technology and a return to the primitive and between good decisions and misguided ones."

Like some of the best sci-fi, *Appleseed*'s vision of the future goes beyond mere gadgets (as spectacular as Shirow's advanced technology is) to show genuine cultural change. Attitudes are different in 2127; even though most cyborgs are built with no effort to make them appear human (in order to make better use of the technology—for example, Bri's "rabbit ear" sensors allow him to see around corners without exposing his head), normal humans barely bat an eye at their weird appearance.

Another highly distinctive, even bizarre, aspect of *Appleseed*'s future society is its hyper-educated nature. Deunan and her partners in ESWAT casually use quantum physics metaphors to describe their personal lives; later, when booking a French

The banter between Deunan and Bri shows humanity's optimism in the series.

perp, cops smart-mouth the suspect by quoting former French President Charles de Gaulle at him. Like the acceptance of strange technology, the often odd speech of *Appleseed*'s cast serves both a stylistic and a practical purpose for the clever Shirow; not only does it show a different culture, it enables Shirow to speak his ideas through any character he chooses.

With a story as complex and thought-provoking as *Appleseed*, it almost seems too much to ask that the art be as good as the story, but it most certainly is—you don't have to be told, just shown. Shirow hits every angle—he is the most skilled with screentones of any manga artist ever published in America; with tones, he conveys complete control of light and shadow. His action scenes are exciting and explosive, whether he's drawing heavy mecha combat or a basement knife fight. His designs for everything from offices to helicopters are detailed and imaginative, showing unusual influences such as the physiology of insects. And although he displays a tremendous range of character designs, not just the manga "big-eyes," fans always seem to remember his sexy, athletic girls—the ones with the big eyes.

Appleseed may be "cyberpunk" in many ways, but it doesn't fit its cynical stereotype. Its characters are idealists; they truly believe in a world where human beings will learn to stop their cycle of self-destruction and fulfill their real potential. The wise lambs of Olympus strap on Kevlar body armor and pack Heckler & Koch submachineguns to lead a world of foolish lions to a better tomorrow. They're realistic and hard-headed, but not pessimistic. As the series' creator, Shirow won't stand for wallowing in the notion of a dark future; to him, not facing up to the future is a betrayal of everything the human race has ever achieved. Despite its high-tech wonders and lush beauty, *Appleseed* is an anti-escapist comic book; it demands that we learn to act like grown-ups, as its characters do.

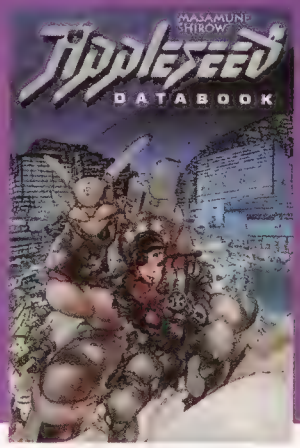
Although *Appleseed* has been on hiatus since 1991 as Shirow has tackled other projects, he has called it his life's work and promises to return to complete as many as six more volumes. In the meantime, there is much to wonder at in volumes one through four. *Appleseed* is the manga of no compromises: Masamune Shirow draws like most people just dream, yet he writes in wide-awake reality.

"In its own way, *Appleseed* is as complex sci-fi as anything written by novelists Arthur Clarke, Robert Heinlein, or Isaac Asimov," concludes Janes. "It bears out continuous reading." W

Berkeley-based writer Carl Horn likes to dream, but can't escape wide-awake reality.

F.Y.I.

Appleseed was originally published in four volumes of five issues each by the now-defunct Eclipse Comics between 1988 and 1991; these issues were square-bound, and ranged in price between $2.75 and $3.50. These issues have been collected into four graphic novels published by Dark Horse Comics, and are available for $14.95 each. Dark Horse's most recent *Appleseed* publication was the two-issue, squarebound *Appleseed Data Book*, 128 pages total, containing background info on the *Appleseed* world with commentary by Shirow, plus a 47-page new *Appleseed* installment, "Called Game." Both issues were published at $3.50, but were recently collected together as a $12.95 graphic novel containing a new wraparound cover.



ANIME PICK OF THE MONTH

Patlabor: The Mobile Police

(U.S. Manga Corps, subtitled, 60-120 mins. ea., $24.95-$29.95 ea., now available)

This is the U.S. Manga Corps release of the original "Patlabor" video and TV series about cops and robots in a future Tokyo that later inspired the excellent "Patlabor" movies available separately from Manga Entertainment. In the videos, the drama of the movies takes a bit of a back seat to humor and character development. Both video series are now available: "The Original Series" (three volumes), and "The New Files" (five volumes), and all are created by the same studio, Headgear, led by Mamoru Oshii ("Ghost In The Shell").

Although "Patlabor" is famous for its mecha combat featuring the stylish "Ingram" robot, the real treasure of the series is the great cast of characters who make up police unit SV2, a lineup worthy of "Hill Street Blues." Standouts include "The Original Series" episodes #5 and #6, where a coup plot in Japan has a cruise-missile trump card, and "The New Files" episode #8, a hilarious satire of Oshii's 1960s radical youth disguised as a one-week civil war within the SV2 maintenance barracks! Look out for the "Patlabor" TV series from U.S.M.C. in 1998!

MANGA PICKS OF THE MONTH

Must-read manga books shipping in September

Flag Fighters #1
Studio Ironcat

From Masaomi Kanzaki, artist of Viz's *Xenon*, comes a saga of extraordinary fighters who face off for honor alone! The "Flag" is the personal emblem of the members of a super-elite league of those whose inhuman combat skill made them into cast-outs from the martial arts schools of the world. Now, the blood of the Flag Fighters burns in their own ring as they battle for each other's flag, the very embodiment of warrior pride.

Gunsmith Cats: Shades of Gray #5 (of 5)
Dark Horse Comics

Gray's the ruthless one-armed crook who just broke out of the state pen; Bean's the bulletproof getaway driver who's never been caught. When a last-minute double-cross on the run to the border pits the two against each other, cutie con tracker Rally and her bomb-freak pal Minnie are caught in the middle.

Manga Vizion Vol. 3, No. 9
Viz Comics

You've seen the startling *noir* anime interpretation from U.S. Manga Corps—now, beginning with this issue, the original comic story: *Blackjack*, which depicts cases of bizarre medical horror from the "God of Manga," Osamu Tezuka, creator of the Harvey-nominated *Adolf*! Blackjack is a scarred, cloaked, outlaw doctor who travels the world to perform surgical miracles. But miracles come with a price—and we're not just talking about Blackjack's hefty fee!

Neon Genesis Evangelion #1 and Neon Genesis Evangelion Special Collector's Edition #1
Viz Comics

Voted #1 manga of 1996 in the Japanese comics mag *Comickers*, this is the manga version of the smash-hit anime TV show *Evangelion* (available in the U.S. from A.D.V. Films). In 2015, mankind faces its last judgment from the mysterious "Angels," but is the true war with them or ourselves? The *Special Collector's Edition* will be released simultaneously, featuring a variant cover and "unflopped" artwork in its original, Japanese right-to-left orientation.

New Vampire Miyu #1
Studio Ironcat

Stylish, beautiful goth from the quill pen of artist Narumi Kakino'uchi, continuing the struggle between life, love and death for the vampire princess Miyu, who brings her gift to tormented human souls who beg to be released from their sorrow-filled existence in the world of mortal men! (Check out the anime from AnimEigo!)

Tenchi Muyo #6
Pioneer Entertainment

An official American comic interpretation of one of the most beloved anime videos of recent years: the story of a young man named Tenchi with a lineage of destiny and a house full of beautiful alien roommates! This sixth issue is the exciting conclusion to the "Ryo-ohki's Day" story arc, where Tenchi and the bombastic Ryoko team up to save their cute, but ultra-powerful "pet" cabbit (cat-rabbit) Ryo-ohki from a game hunter!

▲ The Two Faces of Tomorrow #2 (of 13)
Dark Horse Comics

Yukinobu Hoshino's adaptation of the man vs. supercomputer hard-sci-fi thriller by author James P. Hogan! A near-disaster has everyone concerned about the TITAN network. Switching it off could plunge civilization into chaos, as all society depends on the vast computer network; leaving it on could lead to the destruction of mankind. It's up to Ray Dyer to come up with a solution, before TITAN does...

You're Under Arrest
Dark Horse Comics

The first trade paperback collection of *Oh My Goddess!* creator Kosuke Fujishima's wild manga of Miyuki and Natsumi, the Tokyo P.D.'s toughest babes in blue, that inspired the anime from AnimEigo! Whether collaring the "Silk-Panty Prowler" or busting the "Golf Club Gang," this is the book to throw at those wanting law enforcement at its cutest ...and funniest!

By Joyce M. Steel

Spidey Sense in September

Fleer/SkyBox is up first this month with *Spider-Man Premium '97*. The web slinger himself stars in a brand-spanking-new series that will revolutionize the way cards are looked at. And Spidey couldn't be more happy! Not only does the 81-carder boast a funky new look, but it traces the evolution of comic art with nine panels dedicated to each different era. You'll find white-on-black pencil sketches, ink drawings, old-time comic stylings, airbrush art and combination photographic-painted pieces.

The *Spider-Man Premium* card backs come together to form one of the most mondo posters ever, penciled by Pat Olliffe. Meanwhile, a parallel set makes another poster by John Romita Jr. If that ain't enough, Fleer/SkyBox creates a new chase card format debuting with the series. The Sketchagraph card's a combination of a sketch and an autograph; there are 2,000 of 'em, and each one is an original piece of art (one per 288 packs or 1:288)! They're drawn by folks like Joe Kubert, Mike Deodato Jr., John Romita Sr. and Mike Wieringo (six cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.99).

FLEER'S NEW HOME

Fleer/SkyBox, formerly owned by Marvel Entertainment Group Inc. is now owned by Chase Manhattan. Fleer/SkyBox still controls the Marvel license for trading and game cards. It is still too early to tell how this change of ownership will affect the future of Fleer/SkyBox's relationship with Marvel.

OVERPOWERING EXPANSION

And if playing games is your thing, check out the "Classic" 200-card expansion to the *OverPower* CCG. *Classic OverPower* adds oldtimers like Black Panther, Havok and Absorbing Man to the game's mix. In addition, the set contains an all-new set of Tactics called Artifacts, which includes stuff like The Cosmic Control Rod (used by Annihilus), The Ultimate Nullifier (used against Galactus) and the Super-Soldier Serum—the one that turned Steve Rogers into Captain America (15 cards per booster pack, suggested retail $2.95).

RUSTED 'STEEL'

Fleer/SkyBox has announced that plans for a series based on the "Steel" movie have been canceled. A talking head over there reports they "just decided not to do a card set on it." 'Nuff said. And "Babylon 5" fans: keep yer pants on. The *Season Four* series is comin' out in November; we'll give ya more on it then.

THE OUTER CARD LIMITS

While you sci-fi fans are waitin' on the "Babylon 5" set, be sure to check out the new set from DuoCards based on "The Outer Limits," that 1960s boob-tube classic which was revived on cable a few years back with all-new effects. The 81-carder features art from both the original and newfangled versions, full with episode guides, photos, illustrations, props, etc. Chase cards include six Chromium "Gadgets" cards (1:15), two Gold Monster cards (two per case) and six OmniChrome cards available through a mail-in offer on the packs (seven cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

ELVIRA: MISTRESS OF THE CARDS

Comic Images brings a shot of Halloween a little early this year, but hey—it's never too early to dress weird and act freaky, right? Just ask Elvira. She's been doing it for how many years now? And now she's actually starring in our final series of the month, a 72-carder called *Mistress of OmniChrome*. Yep, the whole thing's gonna be printed on eerie blue iridescent stock, and feature photos and art of Elvira on the fronts, along with her own campy quotes on the backs. Chasing the series are six "Festival of Fright" Chromium cards (1:15) and 500 randomly inserted Autographed Cards (seven cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

HAUNTING PREMONITIONS

Speaking of the all-hallowed holiday, next month's column will be haunted by spooky sets featuring Darkness, Witchblade, Darkchylde and Lady Vampire. Stay tuned... W

Joyce Steel once grappled with Satan himself. Not surprisingly, she got her butt kicked.

"Wait, wait! Honey, it's me! I thought you wanted to get into role-playing!"
Spider-Man Premium '97

"That's why I've been losing so much weight...I've got a tapeworm!"
Classic OverPower

"We have a saying on my planet: he who goes to bed with itchy heiney wake up with smelly finger...Hey! Look at me when I'm talking to you!"
"The Outer Limits"

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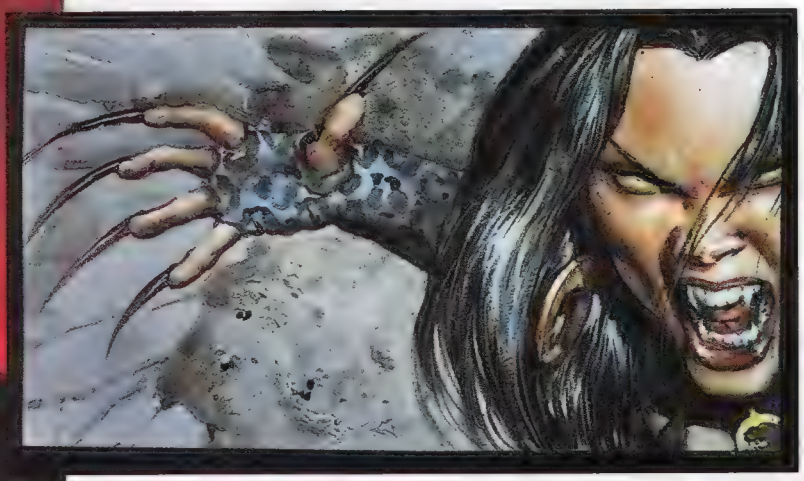
Harris Comics Presents:

The "Appear With Pantha" Contest!

Hey, did ya ever want to appear in a comic book? Well, this is your chance to be a star! Harris Comics and artist Mark Texiera want to put you–yes, *you* inside the pages of a future issue of *Pantha*! Just imagine, your likeness painted into a piece of artwork, eternally preserved for future generations of comic fans to enjoy! Just like the Mona Lisa!

What To Do: It's as easy as cake! Simply fill out the entry form below and mail it in! Winners are chosen randomly, so each one of you has an equal chance at shining in the spotlight! So go break a leg!



Grand Prize (1): One Grand Prize winner will earn himself an original page of painted artwork from *Pantha* #1, an autographed copy of *Pantha* #1 signed by Mark Texiera and a Pantha promo trading card signed by Texiera. PLUS! That Grand Prize winner will *also* have his or her likeness painted into a future issue of *Pantha*! Talk about amazing prizes!

First Prize (25): Twenty-five readers will each get one copy of *Pantha* #1 autographed by Texiera and one Pantha promo card autographed by Texiera.

Second Prize (50): Fifty readers will each get one Pantha promo card signed by Texiera.

Fill this out and put it in an envelope. Send to: Appear With Pantha Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is October 31, 1997.

HARRIS COMICS

This month's contest is sponsored by Harris Comics, publishers of spooky hot babes.

Legal Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Harris Comics, their immediate families and Tex. That guy's trouble. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, telephone number with area code and e-mail address on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Appear With Pantha Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. Science fact: If you eat a lot of meat and eggs, your farts will seriously stink. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by October 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Or who would win this fight—plain old Pink Panther or Pantha with her claws removed? Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected randomly from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on or about November 14, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after November 14, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Appear With Pantha Winners List, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Pantha Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

E-Mail Address _____

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are August's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Eeee-yow! When DC Comics relaunched a new Justice League America in the new *JLA* title, they started things out the way things should be started out in a brand-spankin' new title—with slam-bang action! **Thrill** to the arrival of the alien Hyperclan! **Chill** at the Hyperclan's execution of bad guys (and maybe even Wolverine and Doctor Doom, too)! **Wonder** at the destruction of the JLA's satellite headquarters! **Weep** at the fate of longtime JLA'er Metamorpho! **Cheer** at the coming of Batman as he arrives on the scene! Oh, yeah—one other thing: **Shell** out lotsa greenbacks for this funnybook if you wanna see all this! **LAST MONTH: 1**

2. DARKCHYLDE #1

WRITER: Randy Queen
ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

The thing we can't figure out—this Darkchylde chick's wardrobe. Think about it. She's now selling a quarter-bajillion copies of *Darkchylde* each issue, so you figure she's gotta have some cash. But she's always wearing those half-shirts (Like she can't afford a whole one?), her jeans are always torn (Like she can't afford a new pair of Levi's?) and her underwear is always hanging out (usually from her torn jeans). Now waitasec! Maybe the fact that usually goes around half-dressed contributes to the fact that she sells a quarter-bajillion copies. Hmmm. We think we get it now. **LAST MONTH: 4**

3. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Witchblade #1 has been in this countdown since Top Cow was just a Top Calf. Why do people dig this book so *mucho*? A number of reasons: Sara Pezzini, our protagonist, has leggy supermodel looks and she's a real stand-up kinda chick—one you can count on when the chips are down. Plus, the book's coloring has to be seen to be believed. Plus, the pencils of Michael Turner are turnin' heads so fast you'd swear your average comic geek was Linda Blair. Plus, people love puzzling over names like "D-Tron" and "Z." Nice combination. **LAST MONTH: 3**

NUMBER THREE

NUMBER FOUR

4. THE DARKNESS #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

One o' them common childhood fears (uh, not that we ever had any) is fear of the darkness. One o' them common Top Cow villain fears is fear of The Darkness. And them bovine bad guys should be good 'n' scared because The Darkness is one tough-ass power to have. With this nifty power, Jackie Estacado can create darned near anything he wants, provided he understands how it works. That's pretty neat. Now if we had that ability, we'd create either the perpetual burrito-making machine or a nymphomaniac redhead. Okay, we'd make the redhead. **LAST MONTH: 2**

NUMBER FIVE

5. JLA #2

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

If every comic collector who's gone nearsighted from poring over price guide pages wants a copy of *JLA* #1 more than they want a zit-free face, then *JLA* #2 shouldn't be much farther down the ol' wish list. It isn't. But here's a tip for the frugal-minded: You can get *JLA* #2, plus a #1, #3 and #4, in the *JLA: New World Order* paperback, available at a comic store near you. It's only $5.95, which should leave you more bucks so you can buy a copy of *Resurrection Man* #1 over there. **LAST MONTH: 7**

6. FANTASTIC FOUR #1

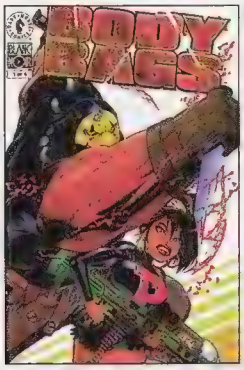
WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: Jim Lee and Scott Williams

NUMBER SIX

Hey! "Heroes Reborn" is over already! Move on to something else! Actually, screwy as it seems, there are a lot of fans coming out of the woodwork to say that they *really liked* the controversial Marvel reboot plan. And the title they really liked the most? That would be *Fantastic Four*. Were fans hyped over the characters? Nah. They were there already. Were they jazzed for new plots? Not really. The new *FF* just rehashed old stories. So what did they like? There's always that Jim Lee character. He sells books. **LAST MONTH: 11**

7. BODY BAGS #1

WRITER: Jason Pearson
ARTIST: Jason Pearson



NUMBER SEVEN

Body Bags! What a cool name! It's bigger than *Toe Tags* and makes a hell of a lot more sense than *Dish Rags*! But the reason *Body Bags* #1 appears here is not just 'cause of the title. It's because there's a certain segment of you wacky readers out there who like a big honkin' dose of violence once in a while and *Body Bags* delivers on that front. Yeah, it's full of stabbings, eye-gougings, chicken mutilations, dwarf bowling and other various and sundry nastiness. Sounds like good clean fun to us. **LAST MONTH: 5**

8. RESURRECTION MAN #1

WRITERS: Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning
ARTIST: Butch Guice

NUMBER EIGHT

And now for something completely different! *Resurrection Man* is the story of a memory-stripped drifter named Mitch (he doesn't even know his last name) who has the ability to come back from the dead with a new superpower each time he dies. And he dies a lot. The catch? He never knows what his new power is gonna be, and sometimes never finds out until it's too late. He also comes back with a few shards of memory from his past life each time he's resurrected. Trust us: It's mighty good. **LAST MONTH: 16**

9. ASTRO CITY (VOL. 2) #1

WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTISTS: Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg

NUMBER NINE

Astro City breaks typical comic convention in one very important way: There ain't no main character. Actually, *Astro City* could be called an ensemble cast sort of thing, with a number of main characters, none of whom gets the spotlight for all too long. Darned near every issue, there's a new character in focus, with do-gooders like Samaritan, Winged Victory or the Confessor taking center stage. That keeps things nice 'n' fresh. The only constant? Darned good superhero stories, issue in and issue out. So tell the neighbors, already. It's nifty-keeno stuff. **LAST MONTH: 18**

10. NIGHTWING #1

WRITER: Chuck Dixon
ARTISTS: Scott McDaniel and Karl Story

NUMBER TEN

Dick Grayson, the guy who was Robin for about 53 years, grew up and became Nightwing. The trail of some murders he was investigating in Gotham City led him to Blüdhaven (Blüdhaven, incidentally, is the coolest comic place to write, 'cause it's got an umlaut over the "u."). And good ol' junior detective Dick TOOK 11 ISSUES TO SOLVE THE DAMN CASE! This is the guy who worked with Batman for years? We think he was slackin' so he could have his own ongoing series in Blüdhaven. Oh, well. Fans seem to dig it. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED**

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. JUSTICE LEAGUE: MIDSUMMER'S NIGHTMARE #1 DC
12. DARKNESS #2 IMAGE
13. DARKCHYLDE #2 MAXIMUM
14. ARCANUM #1 TOP COW
15. HITMAN #1 DC
16. THE TENTH #1 IMAGE
17. LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #1 HOMAGE
18. WITCHBLADE #2 IMAGE
19. PREACHER #1 DC
20. UNKNOWN SOLDIER #1 DC

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH • by Lars Pearson

'LONG HALLOWEEN' IS NO SALES PUMPKIN

Who said crime doesn't pay?

Everyone seems to dig ***Batman: The Long Halloween***, the 13-issue maxi-series in which almost every character walks out a loser. This black-hearted tale, painstakingly crafted by writer **Jeph Loeb** (*Cable*) and artist **Tim Sale** (*Wolverine/Gambit*), has netted more attention than any Bat-book has in a long time. Makes sense—the "world's greatest detective" often works best when he's involved in a solid mystery, and *Long Halloween*, with its "guess who the Holiday serial killer is" puzzle, is making readers sweat blood in suspense.

The title's selling like manure shovels at the local county fair, and in an incredibly rare trend for a mini- or maxi-series, orders on newer issues are actually increasing. Depending on where you live, *Long Halloween* could cost you a bundle, with #1 at as much as $14, and #2 close behind. But if history is any indication, this upward price trend will likely snap when DC inevitably releases a trade paperback collecting all 13 issues. Readers love *Long Halloween* primarily for its story, so fans will probably opt to buy a collection for $20 or so rather than shill out big-mama dollars for the originals.

JLA 'NIGHTMARE': DREAM COME TRUE

Moolah. That's what ***JLA*** is producing for DC, and what fans are rabidly giving up for the series. The *JLA* title is popping like Rice Krispies on the market, and now there's a new back-issue mover to join the current ongoing series.

Justice League: A Midsummer's Nightmare is the JLA fix *du jour*. This three-issue mini-series directly preceded the ongoing *JLA* and reunited the core DC characters, setting the stage for the ongoing series. And the fact that it was written by fan-faves Mark Waid (*Kingdom Come*) and Fabian Nicieza (*X-Men*) doesn't hurt much either. Issues #1 and #2 of *Midsummer's Nightmare* go for as high as $10-$12 in some regions, and #3 could be the sleeper (there's a pun in there, if you read the series), since it was the lowest-ordered of the bunch. Watch out for it.

'ALPHA' GETS AN A

Great Captain Canuck! Canada's strongest... okay, Canada's *only* superhero team is blazing a trail unseen for a new Marvel book since the "Heroes Reborn" launch. Not bad for a formerly canceled title that hasn't seen the "new release" racks in three years.

Alpha Flight has roped in readers with new creators, established characters and a machinistic web crafted by DC/Vertigo writer **Steven T. Seagle** (*Sandman Mystery Theatre*). The title has become an enthralling collection of mysteries. How and why did Guardian de-age to 19 years old? Sasquatch looked fine in *Deadpool* (reg. series) #1—is this new, savage version really him? When did the plain-Jane Heather Hudson start looking like such a hot babe? And what is Depart-

Batman ponders the availability of *Batman: The Long Halloween* (left), while *Justice League: A Midsummer's Nightmare* (below) is gaining momentum.

ment H's master plan? We all wanna know.

New series often take a hit in sales after a #1 issue, but *Alpha Flight*'s resisting that trend so far. Things are looking good north of the border.

STUFF YOU GOTTA KNOW

• ***Batman Adventures: Mad Love*** (DC)—With the Harley Quinn action figure hotter than a $2 pistol, interest has been awakened in this tidbit, the first comic starring the Joker's mad sidekick. *Mad Love* was initially ordered about as heavily as rats in a plague hut, so grab it if you see it.

• ***Boba Fett: Bounty on Bar-Kooda*** (Dark Horse)—How many actual speaking lines did this character have in the "Star Wars" movies? Zero? But because he's so seductively mysterious, he's one of the most popular "Star Wars" characters around. And of all the Boba Fett books, *Bounty on Bar-Kooda*, the first solo-Fett issue, is selling faster than your average land speeder.

Fans're finally noticing *The Men in Black* #1.

• ***The Men in Black* #1-#3** (Aircel)—Demand for "Men in Black" comics wasn't very high even when the movie debuted, but fans finally noticed this nugget. This is the *original*, tiny-print *Men in Black*, so obscure that most price guides don't list it (It's in *Wizard*, though—man, aren't we great backpatters?). Issue #1 can go for as high as $90. If you've used it for bird cage liner, fish it out. Could still be worth something. W

Wizard *Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson isn't taking his chances with Holiday. It's National Free Women Day and he's keeping a VERY low profile. Just in case.*

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

1 **Garth Ennis**
Hitman, Preacher

Paul Schiraldi
2 **Mark Waid**
Ka-Zar, Flash

Paul Schiraldi
3 **Peter David**
Aquaman, Supergirl

J. Schuyler
4 **Scott Lobdell**
Uncanny X-Men

Paul Schiraldi
5 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City, Thunderbolts

Boba Martin
6 **Grant Morrison**
JLA, The Invisibles

Paul Schiraldi
7 **Frank Miller**
Sin City

Al Ortega
8 **David Wohl**
Witchblade

9 **Joe Kelly**
Deadpool; upcoming: X-Men

10 **Steven T. Seagle**
Alpha Flight, Sandman Myst. Theatre; upcoming: Uncanny X-Men

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

Paul Schiraldi
1 **Jim Lee**
Divine Right

Paul Schiraldi
2 **Joe Madureira**
Uncanny X-Men

3 **Michael Turner**
Witchblade

Jim McHugh
4 **Marc Silvestri**
The Darkness

5 **J. Scott Campbell**
Gen¹³

Paul Schiraldi
6 **Adam Kubert**
Incredible Hulk

Paul Schiraldi
7 **Alex Ross**
upcoming: *Uncle Sam*

C. Blankenhorn
8 **Andy Kubert**
Ka-Zar

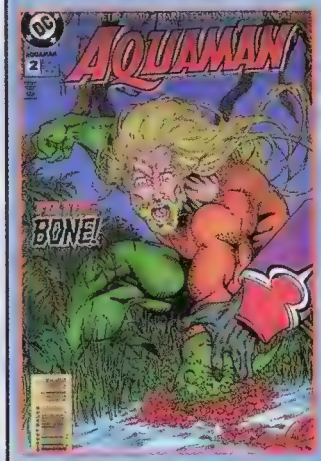
Al Ortega
9 **Carlos Pacheco**
X-Men

10 **Mike Wieringo**
Sensational Spider-Man

***Pencilers and painters**

***Wizard*'s Top Ten Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

BURIED TREASURE



Aquaman (current series) #2

The endless popularity of *JLA* has led to something of a revival in interest for individual members like Green Lantern and Aquaman. In particular, many *JLA* readers are wondering, "Why does Aquaman look so pissed?" Aquaman's change to a perpetually hairy and crotchety individual started when he lost his kingdom and his family... but this issue depicted his most eye-popping loss: his hand. While fighting a terrorist named Charybdis, Aquaman's left hand was savagely nibbled off by piranha, and he later replaced it with the eye-catching cybernetic hook he uses today.

DC has never reprinted this issue, and most of Aquaman's current series is pretty cheap, making it easily accessible. And yes, Virginia—since it's a #2, there's a heckuva lot fewer of these floatin' about than there are #1s, so it's comparatively tough to get. So get yours today to better your comic collection and increase your knowledge of hostile marine life. ■ *LP*

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of JULY.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for July. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books.

1. Uncanny X-Men #347 (Marvel)
2. X-Men #67 (Marvel)
3. Fantastic Four #11 (Marvel)
4. Spawn #64 (Image)
5. Wolverine #116 (Marvel)
6. Gen[13]/Generation X #1 (Image)
7. Iron Man #11 (Marvel)
8. Avengers #11 (Marvel)
9. JLA #10 (DC)
10. JLA #9 (DC)
11. Captain America #11 (Marvel)
12. Generation X #30 (Marvel)
13. Curse of the Spawn #11 (Image)
14. X-Man #30 (Marvel)
15. The Darkness #7 (Image)
16. Witchblade #16 (Image)
17. Gen[13] #21 (Image)
18. X-Force #69 (Marvel)
19. Cable #46 (Marvel)
20. X-Factor #137 (Marvel)
21. X-Men Unlimited #16 (Marvel)
22. Gambit #1 (Marvel)
23. Incredible Hulk #456 (Marvel)
24. Alpha Flight #2 (Marvel)
25. JLA/WildC.A.T.s (DC)
26. Amazing Spider-Man #426 (Marvel)
27. Kiss: The Psycho Circus #1 (Image)
28. Excalibur #112 (Marvel)
29. Superman #127 (DC)
30. Adventures of Superman #550 (DC)
31. Action Comics #737 (DC)
32. Superman: The Man of Steel #71 (DC)
33. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #83 (Marvel)
34. Spectacular Spider-Man #249 (Marvel)
35. Psylocke & Angel: Crimson Dawn #2 (Marvel)
36. Sensational Spider-Man #19 (Marvel)
37. JLA Secret Files #1 (DC)
38. Batman #546 (DC)
39. Superman: The Man of Tomorrow #9 (DC)
40. Maverick #1 (Marvel)
41. Deadpool #8 (Marvel)
42. Marvel Team-Up #1 (Marvel)
43. Amazing Spider-Man '97 (Marvel)
44. Detective Comics #713 (DC)
45. Batman: The Long Halloween #10 (DC)
46. Fighting American #1 (Awesome)
47. Adventures of Superman Annual #9 (DC)
48. Gen[13] Bootleg #9 (Image)
49. Thunderbolts #6 (Marvel)
50. Star Wars: Dark Force Rising #3 (D.H.)
51. Green Lantern #90 (DC)
52. Supergirl #13 (DC)
53. The X-Files #32 (Topps)
54. Daredevil/Deadpool '97 (Marvel)
55. Preacher #29 (DC)
56. What If? #100 (Marvel)
57. Kurt Busiek's Astro City (vol. 2) #11 (Image)
58. Ka-Zar #5 (Marvel)
59. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #98 (DC)
60. Nightwing #12 (DC)
61. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #66 (DC)
62. DV8 #10 (Image)
63. Mage: The Hero Defined #1 (Image)
64. The Superman/Madman Hullabaloo! #2 (D.H.)
65. The Flash #129 (DC)
66. Catwoman #49 (DC)
67. S. Wars: Tales of the Jedi: F. of the Sith Empire #2 (D.H.)
68. WetWorks/Vampirella #1 (Image)
69. The Kents #2 (DC)
70. Wonder Woman #125 (DC)
71. Robin #45 (DC)
72. Purgatori: The Dracula Gambit #1 (Chaos!)
73. Batman Chronicles: The Gauntlet (DC)
74. Elektra #10 (Marvel)
75. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #24 (Marvel)
76. Heroes for Hire #3 (Marvel)
77. Strong Guy Reborn (Marvel)
78. Silver Surfer #131 (Marvel)
79. JLA Gallery (DC)
80. Catwoman Annual #4 (DC)
81. The Flash Annual #10 (DC)
82. Venom: Sign of the Boss #1 (Marvel)
83. S. Wars: X-Wing R.S.—Req. for a Rogue #4 (D.H.)
84. WildC.A.T.s #40 (Image)
85. Daredevil #367 (Marvel)
86. Starman #34 (DC)
87. Cyberforce #34 (Image)
88. The Teen Titans #12 (DC)
89. Azrael #33 (DC)
90. Aquaman #36 (DC)
91. Journey into Mystery #512 (Marvel)
92. Tales to Offend (Dark Horse)
93. Nine Volt #2 (Image)
94. Hellshock #7 (Image)
95. Impulse #29 (DC)
96. The Maxx #31 (Image)
97. Vampirella: Blood Lust #1 (Harris)
98. Daydreamers #2 (Marvel)
99. Superboy #43 (DC)
100. Hitman #18 (DC)

JLA SHOWS DC THE MONEY

• ***JLA* #10** (No. 9), *JLA* #9 (No. 10), *JLA/WildC.A.T.s* (No. 25), *JLA Secret Files* #1 (No. 37), *JLA Gallery* (No. 79): Notice a theme? *JLA* is a perfect example of how one strong title can lead to a host of side projects that rake in the dough for a publisher. Hinging on the success of the main *JLA* series (Which finally broke into the Top 10 this month!), *JLA Secret Files* and *JLA/WildC.A.T.s*, with their $4.95 price tags, are huge cash cows for DC. High orders on *JLA Secret Files* may help DC's upcoming *Batman Secret Files* and *Legion of Super-Heroes Secret Files*.

• ***Alpha Flight* #2** (No. 24): Those Canucks aren't giving any ground! A #2 issue will typically nose-dive 25 to 40 percent in sales from its #1 level, since retailers order the #2s before they've actually seen or sold the #1s, and therefore sometimes get gun-shy. So for *Alpha Flight* to slip a mere two notches from last month's No. 22 ranking is nothing short of phenomenal. Special bonus: Marvel offered two covers for this issue, a move that tends to boost sales.

• ***KISS: The Psycho Circus*** (No. 27): They're back! They have long tongues! And they sell comics! This is a pretty good debut for a monthly KISS book, considering the track record for most rock comics rather sucks. Excitement about the KISS action figures from McFarlane Toys helped fuel this Image book's heat.

• ***Maverick* #1** (No. 40), ***Marvel Team-Up* #1** (No. 42): Two middling premieres for Marvel's two newest ongoing titles. One would think the X-affinity of *Maverick* and the Spidey-affinity of *Team-Up* (along with #1's Generation X guest stars) would lead to higher orders, but these debuted in the same neighborhood as *Heroes for Hire* #1.

• ***Fighting American* #1** (No. 46): Not a bad debut for Awesome Entertainment's new book using the character acquired from Joe Simon and the estate of Jack Kirby. Fans who don't give a lick about the Fighting American character still turn out for the former *Captain America* creative team of Jeph Loeb and Rob Liefeld.

• ***What If?* #100** (No. 56): Whoa, Nellie! Marvel's alternate-universe title hit the nitro this month, rocketing up a whopping 30 notches. The reason: An anniversary story featuring the X-Men's Gambit, Rogue and Mr. Sinister.

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#75

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1/2

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MISC

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BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month Angar the Screamer welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section!

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

Once again, we call upon your prestigious knowledge to solve the following riddles. This time, we'll rate your finely honed intellect against the worst crossover premises in comic history. The higher your score, the crappier the crossover.

Score	Rank
0-4	***Secret Wars II*:** Ugh. Worse than *Secret Wars* and *Contest of Champions* combined.
5-14	***Millennium*:** We read it twice and we're still not sure what it's about.
15-19	***Genesis*:** Anything, we repeat, *anything* with the New Gods in it, regardless of the plot, sucks.
20	**Any X-crossover:** The LAST thing the X-books need is more forced writing, more contrived stories and more useless guest stars.

1. We know that Superman has a heart of gold, but what makes up the heart of his foe, Metallo?
A) radioactive uranium 235
B) deadly Kryptonite
C) super-radioactive plutonium 239
D) a bone chip from Doomsday's skeleton

2. Where did Captain America's ex-sidekick, the Falcon, get those happenin' wings of his?
A) The Black Panther gave them to him.
B) His fellow Avenger Tony Stark made them for him.
C) Golden Age hero Red Raven gave them to the Falcon just before he kacked at the hands of Baron Von Strucker.
D) He bought 'em himself with the money he earned playing Dwayne on "What's Happening!!" for three seasons.

3. What was the secret Ives was keeping from Tim Drake (Robin) and his friends?
A) He was being beaten by his father at home.
B) He's addicted to drugs.
C) He's an alcoholic.
D) He dresses up as Ricky Rat in the mall.

4. Which X-Man did Zealot meet during World War II while fighting a bunch of Nazis and Daemonites?
A) Professor X
B) a time-displaced Cable
C) Wolverine
D) Forge

5. What's the name of the church in which Areala the Warrior Nun teaches hot young nuns to combat evil?
A) St. Francis Xavier Church
B) St. Dumas Church
C) St. Thomas Church
D) The Blessed Lady of the Holy Cleavage Church

6. Remember Ben Reilly, the Spider-Clone? (Ugh...) Yeah, well, he was going out with a gal by the name of Jessica. Who was Jessica's diabolical dad?
A) Judas Traveller
B) Dr. Octopus
C) the burglar who killed Uncle Ben
D) that scary old Japanese guy in those Nissan commercials

7. How did Thor's pappy, Odin, lose his left eye?
A) Odin lost it in a battle with Surtur.
B) He lost it when he was trying to protect young Thor from a magic dagger thrown by Loki.
C) He sacrificed it to Mimir, the sentient Well of Wisdom, in order to learn how to thwart Ragnarok.
D) Ha! It was his right eye he lost, by sacrificing it to Mimir.

8. Before there was The Vault, where did Marvel's justice system send all the superpowered bad guys?
A) Stryker's Island
B) Project Pegasus
C) Castle Rock
D) Catheter High (That'll scare 'em straight!)

9. What natural disaster, caused by Major Disaster, just struck Santa Marta, Calif.?
A) fire
B) flood
C) elephant stampede
D) tornado

10. Which of the following Captain Marvel characters doesn't look like some disturbing Earthly animal?
A) Ibac
B) Tawky-Tawny
C) Hoppy
D) Mr. Mind

11. What's the name of the "all-girl band" that Gen 13er Burnout's gal pal, Mel, belongs to?
A) The Riot Grrrls
B) The Sirens
C) Heathers
D) Ellen's Angels

12. What did current Green Lantern, Kyle Rayner, give former Wonder Girl, Donna Troy, as a symbol of his (Sight) love?
A) a heart-shaped diamond that he found on Uranus
B) a necklace that was created from the combined energy of his love and his power ring
C) the powerless Green Lantern ring that once belonged to Hal Jordan
D) a really huge cold sore

13. When Excalibur moved into its first headquarters, where was it located?
A) in a lighthouse
B) behind the face of Big Ben (Y'know, that big clock in the heart of London!)
C) in a cave located below the English Channel
D) in the tiny basement of Captain Britain's parents' house

14. During *Zero Hour*, who did we comic geeks find out was the evil Time Trapper?
A) Waverider
B) Chronos
C) Rip Hunter, Time Master
D) Cosmic Boy

15. In *Astro City* #8, how was the false mayor killed?
A) He got a stake through the heart.
B) He was betrayed and murdered by his supervillain conspirators.
C) He was blasted by aliens.
D) He watched "Batman & Robin"...twice.

16. What band's lyrics does Luis Benitez (y'know, the rocky avatar of *Arcanum*) like to recite?
A) The Doors
B) Nirvana
C) Led Zeppelin
D) Spice Girls (and he's getting *really* annoying)

17. What is the name of the funky antique store owned by Jack Knight, a.k.a. Starman?
A) Knight's Past
B) Knights to Remember
C) Knights Long Ago
D) Jack's Soiled and Useless Crap

18. What mythological group of male-hating babes did Lady Death lead against the evil Genocide?
A) the Valkyries
B) the Furies
C) the Harpies
D) the National Organization of Women

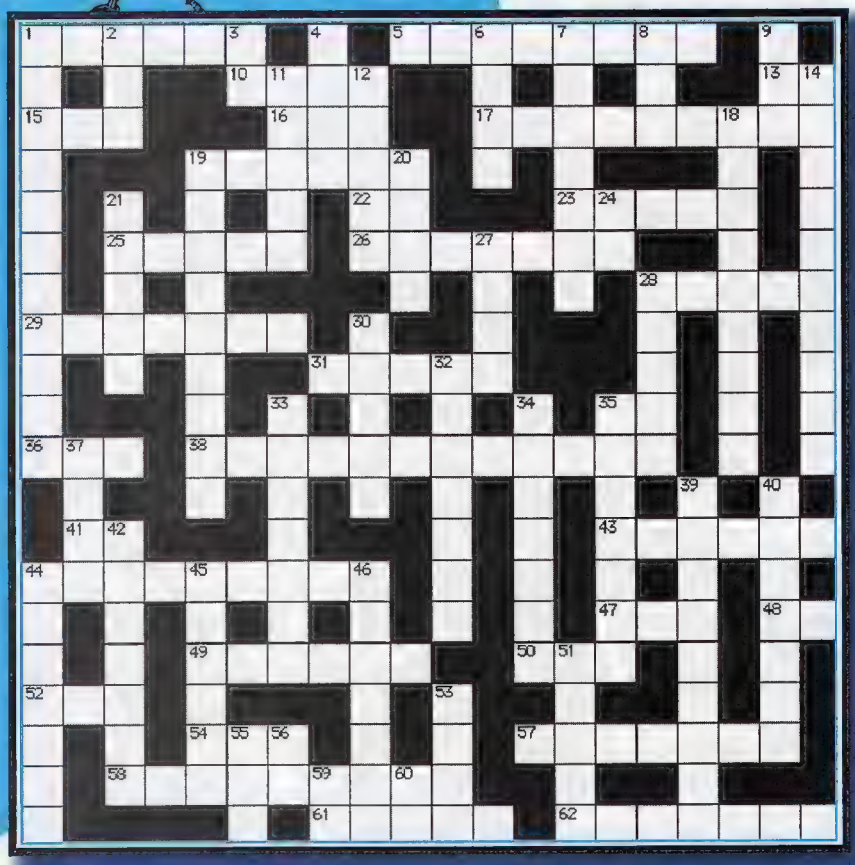
19. Who was responsible for stealing an ancient, ugly statue that resulted in the Ash/22 Brides crossover?
A) aliens trapped on Earth
B) sentient dinosaurs
C) vampires
D) aliens trapped in dinosaurs, and their vampire protectors

20. Who once turned mutant freak Magneto into an infant mutant freak?
A) Eric the Red
B) Alpha the Ultimate Mutant
C) Uatu the Watcher
D) Who cares, but enough with the lame "plots" that are nothing more than hack-job stories thrown together by waaaaay overrated writers who are incapable of nothing more than taking established, loved characters and screwing with them to cover their own un-talent.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff

TOO TOUGH?
Don't be a barge pole.
The answers are on page 206.



1. Dr. Doom or Cyborg
5. Emp's team
10. stretchy superhero's nickname
13. Arsenal's old pastime
15. reuniting Marvel team; ___ Mutants
16. Event's cornerstone hero
17. *Body Bags* hitman
19. annoying "Batman & Robin" gossip-monger
22. Waid's *Kingdom Come* partner; initials
23. Malibu's psychic _____ Man
25. Beast's beauty
26. Carrey told these in "Batman Forever"
28. UltraForce HQ; Headless _____
29. who the Toad called master
31. 14-year-old Body Bagger
35. Arseface's idol; init.
36. Pym's insect friend
38. Paul Pierre Duval
41. Byrne's inker on *X-Men*; init.
43. "I call on the power of _____!"
44. Daredevil's squeeze
47. "Batman: Year _____"
48. Monica Rambeau; init.
49. Event Comics has 22 of 'em
50. site of #1 comic con; ___ Diego
52. *Sovereign Seven* artist
54. magic lasso prevents this
57. Hal Jordan
58. Jonathan Crane
61. 18 down's Hanged Man wears this
62. Black Knight's first transportation

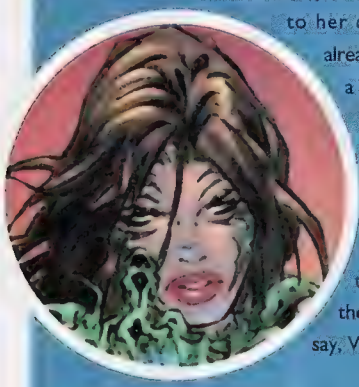
1. Verotik chick
2. Silvestri's studio; Top ___
3. Elfquest guru; init.
4. "Days of Future _____"
6. Marvel's Longshot and Shamrock have this
7. "Hey, Freeze...I'm Batman."
8. timid Metal Man
9. Samson or Savage
11. Black Canary's ex-husband
12. race of Xavier's true love
14. Chance Falconer lives here
18. home to The Confessor
19. Elseworlds Justice Society epic
20. 29 across' real name
21. where Zatanna works
24. "Resistance __ futile."
27. *Enterprise* android
28. "Bad Girl" Wonder Woman foe
30. Japanese comics
32. rat with smiley face on butt
33. Wyatt Wingfoot's tribe
34. the Living Vampire
35. *Deep Space Nine*'s Worf
37. New Warrior's nickname
39. Metropolis' crime syndicate
40. Kryptonite ring is found here
42. Wonder Woman's sister
44. *The* _____ *Joke*
45. Anachronauts' leader
46. shocking Spider-foe
51. DC's "New Blood" superheroine
53. Connor Hawke uses these
55. DC artist ___ Novick
56. crazy about Lady Death; init.
59. Gene Colan's predecessor on *Daredevil*; init.
60. tentacled, temporarily dead villain; init.

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

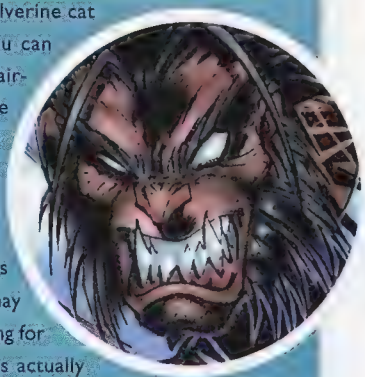
1) WITCHBLADE

YEEEEAAAARRRRGH! Run for the cellar! Bolt the doors! The concussive force that is Witchblade cannot be stopped! She's more powerful than a tornado! Swifter than the Colorado Rapids! And crustier than four-day-old cheese dip! But seriously, folks, that Sara Pezzini chick has taken the comic world by storm. With a mere year-and-a-half worth of stories to her credit, Witchy-Poo has already spawned a spin-off title, a boxed-set collected edition, a CD soundtrack (Really!), a porcelain statue, a set of trading cards and about a kazillion sweat-soaked fanboy dreams. She's 'bout the biggest thing going these days. Even bigger than, say, Wolverine.



2) WOLVERINE

Geezum peegum, this Wolverine cat is one hairy urchin! If you can truly get a shave and a haircut for two bits, we'd like to find a barber, give him a whole buck and then have 'im shave Wolvie, give him a haircut, wax his back and maybe pluck his eyebrows a bit. Yeah, he may *look* like he should be begging for spare change, but Wolvie's actually one of the most popular characters in all of herodom. And with that spiffy new pretty-damn-keen artist on his book in the person of Leinil Francis Yu, we think Wolvie's gonna remain a big kahuna for quite some time, regardless of his grooming habits.



3) SPAWN

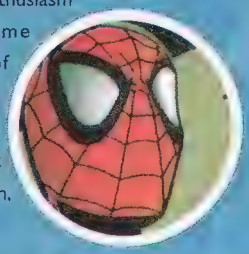
Now *that's* what the collected *Wizard* staff needs: glowing green eyes. If we had 'em, we could intimidate the hell out of cops and never get speeding tickets. We could also go around spooking small children, causing them to drop their candy, so we could eat free Almond Joys all the live-long day. But Spawn never engages in either of those nifty-swell pastimes. He's more concerned with reuniting himself with his family or getting revenge on Jason Wynn, that bad-ass bastard who ordered Spawny-guy's assassination. Geez. That's no fun. Where's his sense of priorities?

4) THE DARKNESS

We've already established that Witchblade is a concussive force that cannot be stopped. Well, the Darkness is right on her heels. With *less* than a year of stories to his credit, that Jackie Estacado guy is building quite a rep for himself on the other end of the Top Cow pasture. Heck, he's even going to find himself crossing over with Witchblade in the October/November "Family Ties" storyline. Hmmm. What would happen if they squared off against each other? Witchy's got that gauntlet thingie, but Jackie's got about 53 of those li'l Darkling guys that'll eat whatever he tells them to. Our money's on the Darkness.

5) SPIDER-MAN

"Spider-Sense...tingling...moving...down this list!" Yeah, Spidey may have dropped a notch or two on this here chart, but it has more to do with the rampant enthusiasm for Top Cow's Terrible Twosome than it has to do with any fault of Spidey's. After all, Spider-Man is still the fast-talkin'-est, web-slingin'-est, guest-starrin'-est, bad-guy-punchin'-est hero that the comic world has ever seen, and fans still love him long time.



6) BATMAN

Batman, on the other hand, ain't exactly a fast-talkin' guy. He doesn't flap his lips much. He likes to let his fists do the talkin' for him. Or his Batarang. Or his Bat-big-stick-that-he's-gonna-use-to-mess-some-bad-guy-up. Y'see, Batman's the kind of guy who likes to get right down to business and whup some villainous butt. If he'd only go after that Joel Schumacher guy and whup ass, we'd all be feeling good.

7) PREACHER

Here's a guy with bloodshot eyes, an evil glare and a scruffy-lookin' 5 o'clock shadow. Is he Jesse Custer, Preacher? Or is he just a random *Wizard* staffer in the deathgrip of a post-Chicago ComiCon hangover? The answer: He's Preacher. But if we had "The Word," Jesse's power to make anyone do what he says, we'd have run that Con a bit differently. We'd have made everyone bathe, for starters. Then we woulda had the biggest blindfolded, pantsless volleyball game you've ever seen.

8) DEADPOOL

It would have been handy to have had Deadpool around in Chicago too. He's always quick with a smart-ass one-liner, which is a pre-requisite if ya wanna work for *Wizard*. He's also good with a gun, so he could've enforced the "Take off that Damn Klingon Head and Go Get a Life" policy that we had. Hmm...maybe we should offer him a job.

9) GAMBIT

Making a triumphant return to our wild and woolly list is that ever-enigmatic Cajun card-thrower, Gambit. Ol' Remy LeBeau just starred in the massive *What If?* #100 and is gearing up for some big-time action in *Uncanny X-Men* #350's "The Trial of Gambit." So he's definitely in the hearts and minds of X-Fans everywhere. And hot dammit, everyone's still talking 'bout his on-again/off-again relationship with Rogue. Seems he's the hero everyone loves to gossip 'bout these days.

10) CAPTAIN AMERICA

Looking a bit surprised to be within the friendly confines of this "Top 10" is everyone's favorite Sentinel of Liberty, Cap'n America. Cap's been a big spotlight guy, starring in two of the high-profile "Heroes Reborn" books. And now that the announcement's been made, fans are slobbering over the prospect of the old Mark Waid/Ron Garney creative team returning on *Captain America*. Heck, Cap himself is so happy, that wild man's celebrating with a big ol' milkshake!

MORT OF THE MONTH

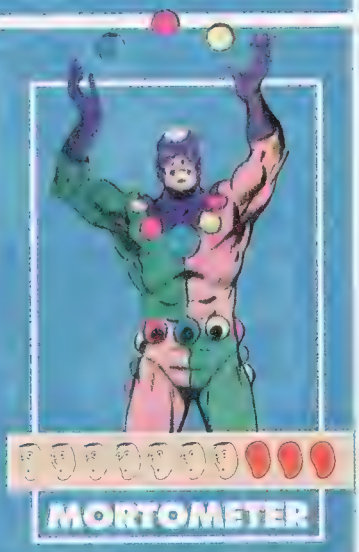
Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

ODDBALL

Woo-wee! The circus must be in town!

No, it's not. We're afraid there'll be no midgets for you. Instead, you get Oddball, an aptly named juggler-turned-criminal! See? We told you comics wouldn't rot your mind! It's that damn juggling that leads you down the road to prison!

Anyhoo, Oddball has the amazing ability to juggle and...that's about it. He's so freakin' lame, he actually joined a team of (we swear to God we're not making this up) juggler-criminals known as the Death-Throws. Oddball's also got a name—Elton Healey—that must've gotten him beat up on playgrounds throughout his youth. And of course, there's that wonderful fashion sense which he's sportin' here. Whadda Mort.



BULL PEN

Wizard vs. Jim Lee, Round Two

Last year, at the San Diego Comic Con, we stole Jim Lee's bathrobe and stuck him with the hotel tab. This year, we did it again...although it was a tad harder. Here's how it went down: Two of *Wizard*'s staff writers and the Big Cheese himself, Gareb Shamus, bypassed the security guard who was ushering people away from a recently ended party, made it into Jim's two-story room and went to work. As Gareb chewed the fat (read: distracted Jim Lee), Jim McLauchlin searched the bathroom and Buddy Scalera the bedroom, turning up...nothing. Zilch. Zero. Nada. No bathrobe. Refusing defeat, Gareb called down to room service, pretended to be Lee, ordered up a bathrobe...and waited. When the bell rang, Buddy once again distracted Lee, Gareb answered the door, got the robe, passed it to Jim (who stuffed it in a backpack he brought along just for the occasion) and the three high-tailed it outta there. Ha-ha, Wizard: 2, Jim Lee: 0.

One of the Damned

Phil Colligan

Assistant Price Guide Editor, *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*

What do you do at Wizard Press?
Basically, I help Art Assistant Dan Reilly with finding art and general research for *Wizard, ToyFare, InQuest* and the specials, send out price guide surveys for Price Guide Editor Bob Marshall, and make sure Donato doesn't take out anyone in the building with his bow and arrow he has on the mailroom wall.

Your favorite sections in *Wizard*?
"Magic Words"—I can't believe the types of letters some readers send in, like the tattoo debates, and Jim's responses to them—and "Bullpen," because all the wacky and slightly illegal things we do actually show up in print.

What surprised you the most about the *Wizard* offices?
Either the weird lifeforms growing in the downstairs men's bathroom urinal, or the evils that one can do with a photocopier and pictures of *Wizard* staffers.

What is something you've done in life that you're most proud of?
Making it through high school relatively unscathed and striving toward a four-year degree in business.

Illustration by Jim Colby

What was your most memorable research assignment?
The time that I had to search for Billy, the overly open and friendly doll, for *ToyFare*.

Most embarrassing moment in your life?
The *InQuest* photo shoot where they dressed me up in Batman boxer shorts, put Trump's *The Art of the Deal*, scissors and several other items in the shorts, and taped a camera to my head, all to make me look like the ultimate game player for a poster. Going into stores and seeing this poster is *really* embarrassing.

Favorite movie of all time...
"Scream." It mixed my two favorite subjects—comedy and horror movies—and I just can't get enough of Neve Campbell.

Who would play you in a movie?
Fred Savage ("The Wonder Years") or an older Elijah Wood ("The Good Son").

Favorite TV shows?
Any pro wrestling program, "Married...with Children" reruns and Howard Stern's E! show.

What's your main goal in life?
The American Dream—to be happily married with 2.3 kids, and filthy rich.

People would be surprised to know that...
...I probably achieved every fanboy's dream by starting to work at Wizard Press when I was 16 years old.

Favorite comics right now?
Astro City, Flash and *Green Lantern*—because they all combine great storytelling with good art, and the main characters are very realistic and you can relate to them.

Favorite comic book story of all time?
The Hobgoblin Saga from *Amazing Spider-Man* #275-#276. They were the first Spider-Man books I remember buying, and the story was very suspenseful.

What superpower would you want, and why?
I'd like to have Captain America's Super Soldier Serum, because you can have super-strength and a excellent physique without having to work out.

WIZARD TOP TEN

Darkseid's top 10 rejected ideas before going with that whole hokey Genesis plan

10. Dig a big hole. Throw in Sovereign Seven. Fill.
9. A secret device that holds fluid, keeping hot liquids hot and cold liquids cold.
8. Revelations. (Hah! Get it?)
7. "To Start Anew"...but then he realized "Genesis" sounded better.
6. Go back in time and assimilate the Earth before the Federation is formed.
5. "Pulp Heroes" annuals! Yeah!
4. Get a role in the Star Wars Prequels (but then he realized "Dark Side" is spelled differently).
3. Buy Chicago ComiCon, then broadcast subliminal messages to all attendees, making them buy multiple copies of *Wizard*. (No, you shouldn't read anything into this.)
2. "Bloodlines II: The Return."
1. License out all the DC characters to ex-DC employees, relaunch their adventures in a pocket universe and then bring them back into the mainstream, essentially relaunching the same characters twice in just under two years. Then vomit.

CONTEST WINNERS

GUNSMITH CATS, *Wizard* #68: José L. Santamaria, Saukville, Wis.
ONSLAUGHT, #68: Nate Mirelez, Morenci, Mich.
22 BRIDES, #69: Look for Toni Lee Dowell (right), of Custer, Ky., in a future of Event's *Painkiller Jane*!
HELLBOY, #69: Lewis Santoni, Brooklyn, N.Y.

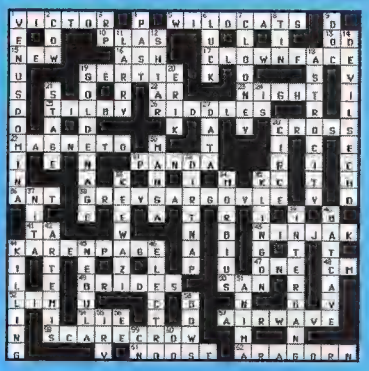
from page 202

C.B.I.Q. answers...

1. B	5. C	9. B	13. A	17. A
2. A	6. C	10. A	14. D	18. A
3. D	7. D	11. B	15. A	19. D
4. C	8. B	12. B	16. A	20. B

from page 203

CROSSWORD answers...



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WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

ANTHONY DANIELS

Being a robot has its advantages. Just ask Anthony Daniels, the man behind the mask of C-3PO in the classic "Star Wars" Trilogy. "C-3PO gave me a lot of opportunity," says Daniels. "I sound like a ditzy beauty queen, but without Threepio, I wouldn't have gotten to travel all over the world, make an anti-smoking commercial or even meet Miss Piggy or Oscar the Grouch."

Since "Star Wars," the 51-year-old London native has been making a part-time career out of the success of his neurotic and verbose character. Through an England-based Star Wars informational phone service he's narrating, personal appearances at science-fiction conventions and an upcoming *Droids* comic book series, Daniels continues to bring life to C-3PO. "Sure, I do other things now, but most people want to talk about C-3PO, and that's fine," he says. "It was hard work, and I'm always flattered when someone tells me they liked my portrayal of Threepio."

Daniels began acting at the age of 24, after almost becoming a lawyer. "My parents didn't want me to become an actor," he laughs. "But I auditioned for drama school and got in. I was lucky that my two best teachers were in mime and radio drama, both of which I used with Threepio."

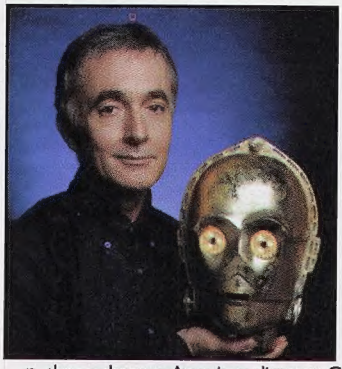


Photo courtesy of Anthony Daniels

Making "Star Wars" was a difficult and painful experience for Daniels, but one he wouldn't trade for anything. After his agent pleaded with him to meet the then-unknown American director George Lucas, Daniels went to the audition without a care. But after talking about Ralph McQuarrie's paintings (which were framed behind Lucas' desk), Daniels was intrigued enough to accept the part of the droid.

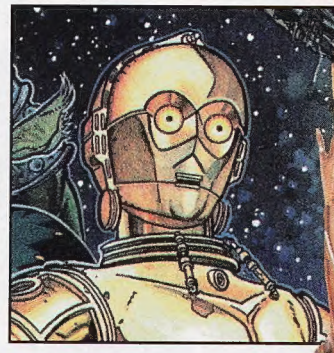
"I read the script without understanding one word," recalls Daniels. "And then I had to be cast into the costume, which was a disgusting experience. It was very uncomfortable. But when the film opened and the audience said, 'Wow,' that's when it became fun."

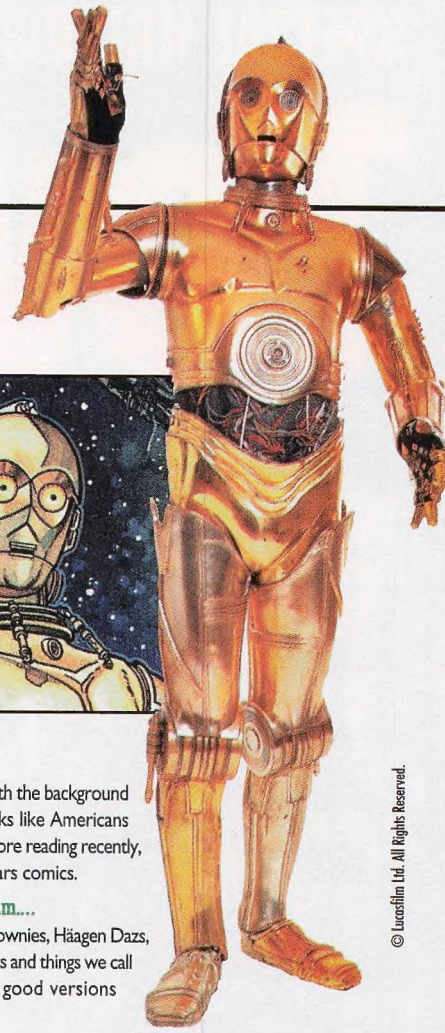
Currently, Daniels is co-writing *Star Wars: The Protocol Offensive*, a September one-shot for Dark Horse Comics, with Ryder Windham. The book features C-3PO and his partner R2-D2 in the midst of an intergalactic conference. "The story is slightly darker than most stories that deal with C-3PO," comments Daniels. "He has quite a strong and serious side to him. It seems that most writers can't be bothered to write him in the proper personality."

But what of Threepio's future in films? Rumors indicate he'll appear in the Star Wars Prequels. "I have been in fairly long discussion with [Lucasfilm]," teases Daniels. "But we'll have to wait and see.

"It is to my mind deeply unprofessional to give away any secrets. It's like saying to a child, 'Do you want to know what you are getting for Christmas? You are getting a new bike.' It kills the surprise. Frankly, I won't tell a thing."

By Matthew Senreich





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Comics that you read...

I wasn't brought up with the background of reading comic books like Americans are. But I have done more reading recently, especially the Star Wars comics.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....

There are so many. Brownies, Häagen Dazs, macadamia nuts, nachos and things we call Smarties, which are good versions of M&Ms.

The one person you'd like to meet...

C-3PO. I think we'd have a lot in common.

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...

As a kid, it was a space ray gun where you push the trigger and it makes sparks. Now, it's probably my C-3PO scotch tape dispenser where he's lying on his back and you pull the tape from between his knees. It's useful, and I use mine all the time.

Things you collect...

I collect antique tin toys, a lot of which go around and around like airplanes. I think they epitomize life...stupid, circular and going nowhere.

Favorite cartoon...

"Beavis and Butt-head." They make me laugh.

Person you've most enjoyed working with...

Big Bird. I like working with [Jim Henson Productions] and those characters. They understand me and I understand them.

Favorite TV show...

"48 Hours"

Last good movie you saw...

"William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet." Stunning. It didn't have a lot to do with Shakespeare, but it had a lot to do with making movies, especially the beginning, which was visually fascinating.

Last good book you read...

England's *The Restaurant Guide*, which is the new restaurant guide to London.

If you had the power of The Beyonder...

I'd leap over tall buildings in a single bound—the traffic in London is dreadful.

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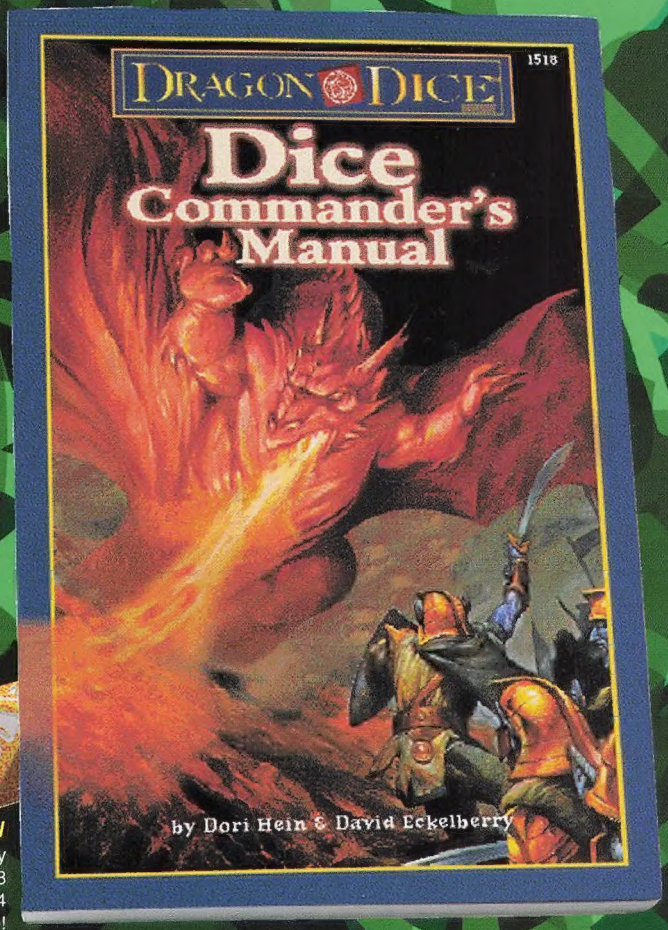

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"D'ere is somethin' about the fight... somethin' about bein' a part of Xavier's dream an' bein' a part of the X-Men dat changes a person.

"Somethin' dat changed me.

From what I was... from what I might've become. Should've known it wouldn't last.

Professor X warned dat a storm was comin'. Dat dere would be trials ahead.

Ah just didn't know dat trial would be mine."

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